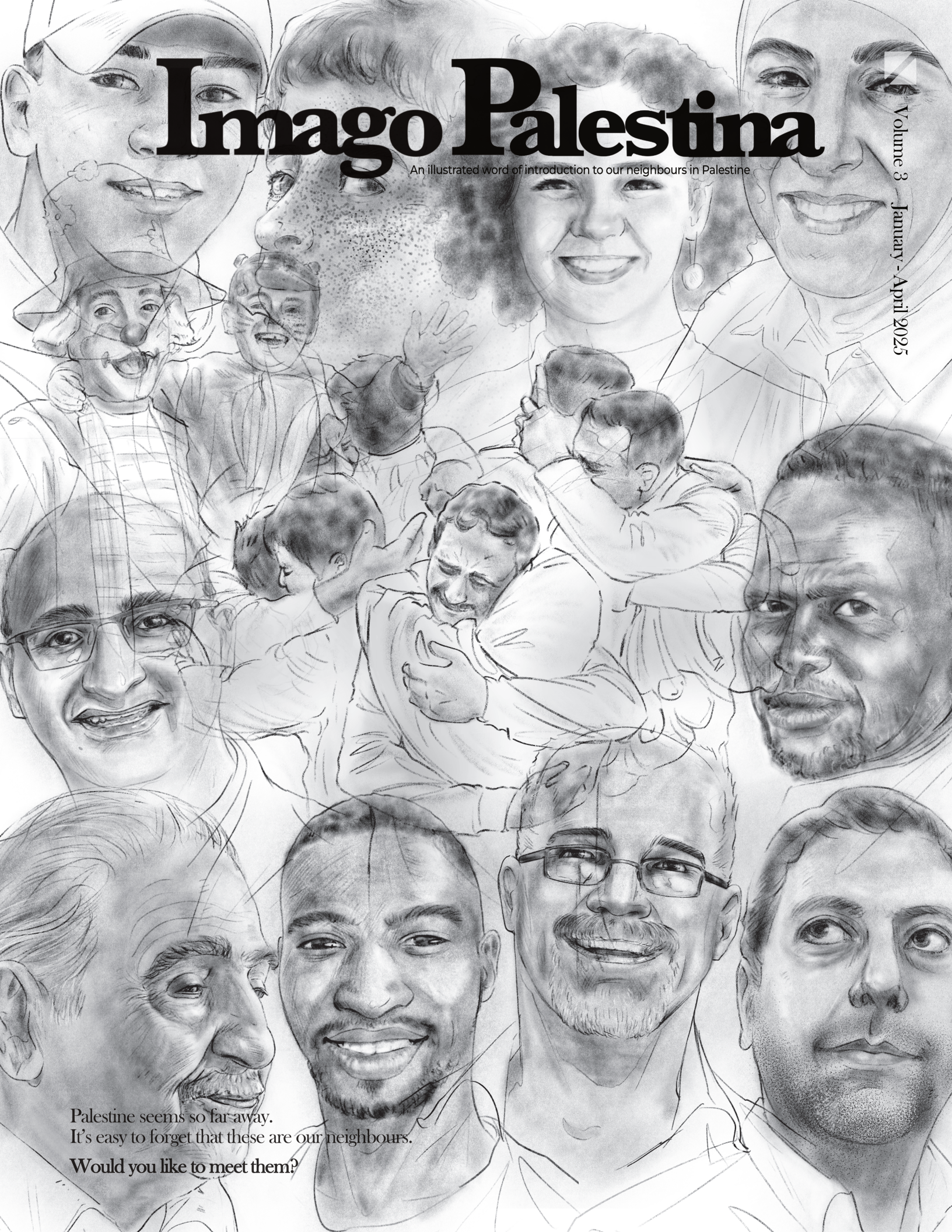
Imago Palestina

An illustrated word of introduction to our neighbours in Palestine

Volume 3 — January - April 2025



Palestine seems so far away.
It's easy to forget that these are our neighbours.

Would you like to meet them?

Imago Palestina Magazine, Vol. 3 (January—April 2025)

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All text written by Stephan "Sven" Goslinski, except "Sulala Animal Rescue," written by Sara Farhat. All illustrations by Stephan "Sven" Goslinski, with no intent to own, infringe upon, or in any other way disrespect these beautiful faces or the neighbours they belong to.

This volume discusses the violent realities of genocide and occupation, including torture and the killing of people of all ages. I encourage you to read courageously but with appropriate caution based on your own experiences.

Imago Palestina was drawn, written, and printed on lands that were taken through coercion and violence from the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, Huron-Wendat, and Mississauga nations. This same colonialism, still alive and well here on Turtle Island, is also what has been deployed against our neighbours in Palestine for the last 76 years, most blatantly now. As we meet our neighbours in Palestine, let us remember that the borders between "here" and "there" are immaterial to our collective responsibility to each other.

Imago Palestina is written in solidarity with the people of Palestine and with all Indigenous people who face oppression, wherever they may reside. It is written in the express goal of both Palestinian freedom and our collective freedom from forces of racism, antisemitism, Islamophobia, imperialism, colonialism, capitalism, militarism, patriarchy, and all ideologies that seek to oppress, exploit, and divide us. None of us are free until all of us are free, and safety can only come from solidarity.

We need to take care of each other.

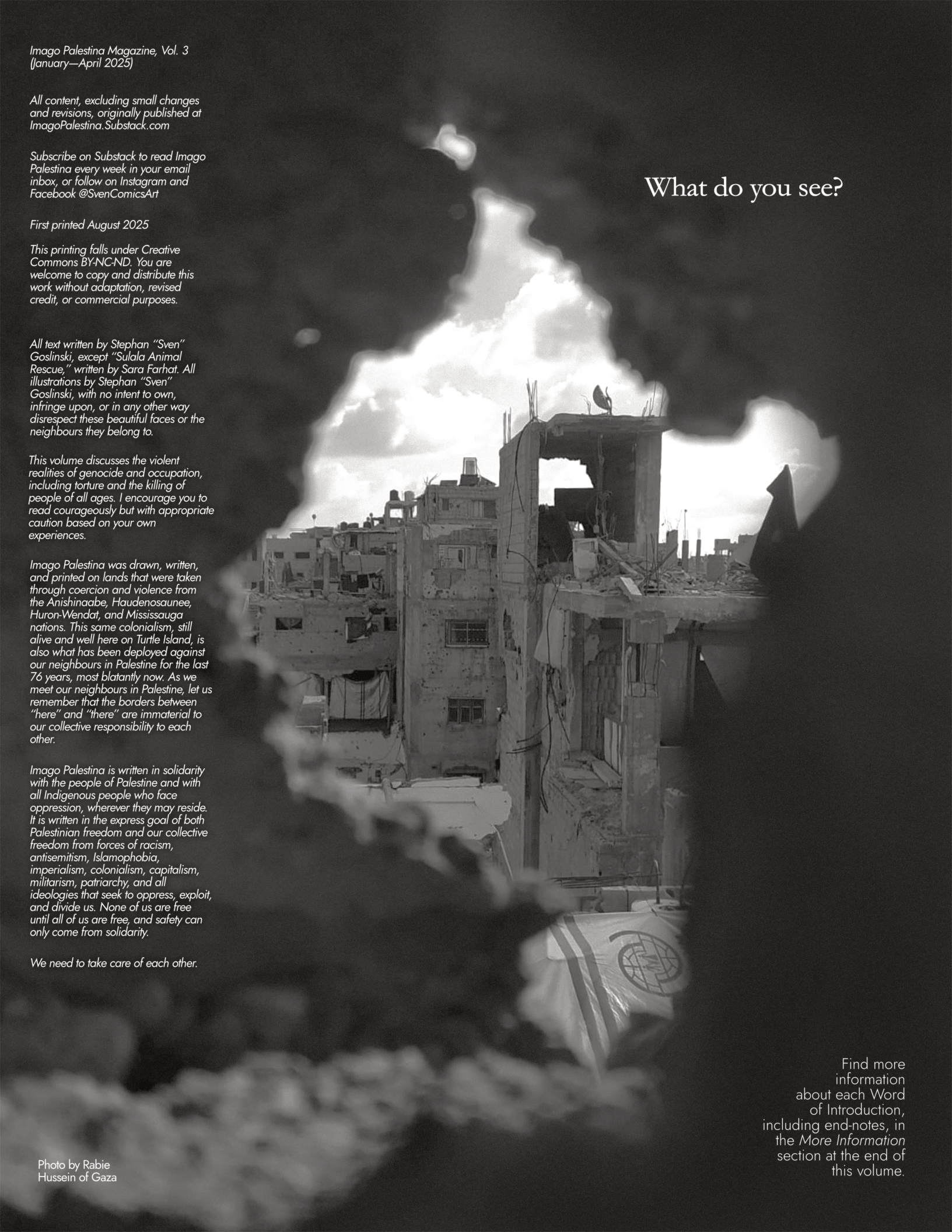


Photo by Rabie Hussein of Gaza

Find more information about each Word of Introduction, including end-notes, in the *More Information* section at the end of this volume.

Can these bones live?

It is January 19, 2025. I am grinning ear to ear at my desk, reading Mohammed Mhawish's words: "It's finally over." A ceasefire has been called. "It's finally over."

It is March 18, 2025. At the beginning of the week, I drew a pure white dove, choked by barbed wire. Now, on Al Jazeera, massacre after massacre rises in the news-feed as bombs fall once again on Gaza. Israel has broken the ceasefire.

It is August 4, 2025. I am sitting at my computer, writing this introduction for an issue due out months ago. On the wall in front of me, I see the faces of the children starving to death in Gaza as Israel continues its brutal, months long campaign of manufactured famine—the worst Gaza has ever seen. My keyboard is stained with tears wept over how useless all this slow work feels.

In the last issue of Imago Palestina, I wrote about someone who told me that "things change so fast over there." I have never felt that cruel velocity more than in compiling this volume. In the span of 48 pages, hopes are ignited and extinguished, just like the lives of so many.

It's fitting that in this volume so afflicted by the conflicts of life and death, hope and despair, but most of all of cruel chronology, one of the first neighbours you'll meet is Dr. Lamma Mansour. I write Imago Palestina for anyone who wants to meet their neighbours in Palestine—as I think we all should. But I write it first for those like me who hold the Christian faith, and if that's you, I urge you to pay attention to what she has to say.

Our faith is profoundly centred on the uncomfortable interplay between the 'now' and the 'not yet.' We're called to hold even the best times loosely, knowing there is better to come, and we're called to work boldly in the worst times, tasked with bringing promised paradise to the here and now. As Dr. Lamma reminds us, hope is working in the messy overlap, when we have more than enough to mourn and often little vision beyond the horizon of our current grief. But hope is demanded of us, by our calling but also by our families, friends, neighbours, and communities, because *there is no tomorrow better than today if we don't make it so.*

"We need to do this work of imagination, not to be sentimental or to escape reality…but because if we fail to do so, others will fill the gap. Others will take up the task of imagining for us." (Dr. Lamma Mansour)

It is today and I am surrounded by death: at least 61 000 Palestinians in Gaza—almost certainly more, into the hundreds of thousands; the millions that languish, starved by an intentional blockade; countless others around the world, like the walking dead or whitewashed tombs, content to carry on with tight lips and downcast eyes, unaware of how their humanity shrivels and gasps within them.

It is tomorrow and I am standing on a green hillside, breathing in the scent of olives on the breeze. I can hear the bells of Al-Makhrour ring out in the distance. I can see children flying kites, the only specks of white in a clear blue sky. My stomach is full of za'atar and pomegranate, and my heart is full with fine company.

Tomorrow isn't promised—I can introduce you to too many people who will never get to see it—but we'll never get there if we stay here.

My goal in the following pages is to spotlight the people living through this blistering today and working with all their strength to bring about a better tomorrow. From the caring volunteers of the Sameer Project, using their intimate knowledge of their communities to bring compassion and support where it's most needed, to bookseller Mahmoud Muna, having his own freedom taken away for championing the free exchange of ideas, to the PRCS medics who braved profound violence to rescue their neighbours, only to pay the ultimate price, I hope these stories will reveal difficult truth but also empower courageous imagination.

Like Ezekiel, we find ourselves surrounded on all sides by death. Bones stretch on in miles of rubble and stolen futures. This truth can drive us to despair or cause us to cry out for better.

Which tomorrow do you want to see?

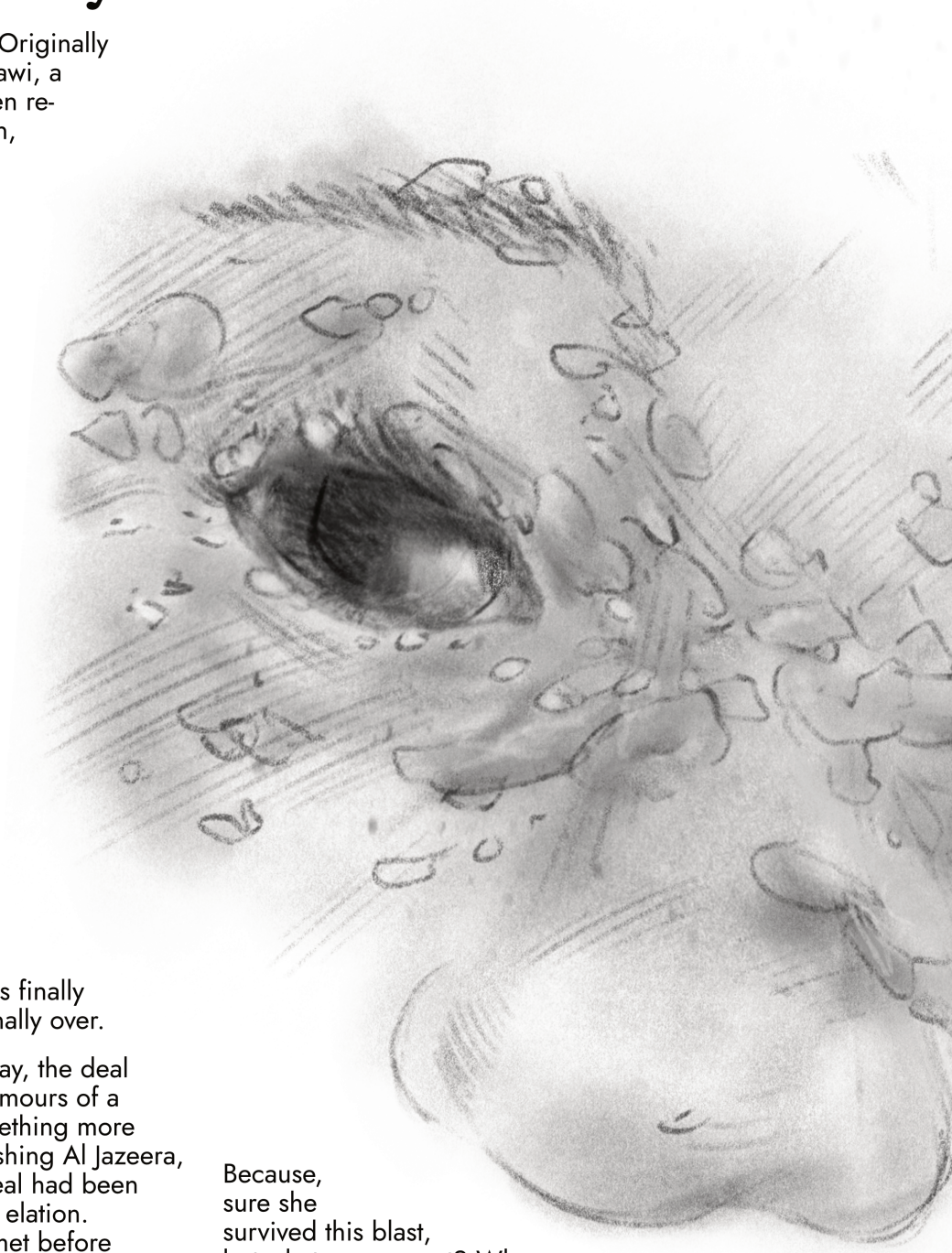
In hope and solidarity,

Sam

First published January 19, 2025

“She Opened Her Eyes!”

A few days ago, I saw a video.[1] Originally posted by Abdullah Al Majdalawi, a Gazan first responder, and then re-posted by Translating Falasteen, the video shows a scene that has grown far too familiar for those of us with eyes on Gaza. A rescue crew clears debris from the body of a young girl who’d been caught in an Israeli strike on Gaza City. Her body is limp as they pull away the rubble and pray, providing in their grief the two dignities they have left to give her.



And then she opens her eyes.

The energy immediately shifts as one of the rescuers cries out “she opened her eyes!” Their hands jump with life as they confidently lift her out of the destruction, wipe her face, clear her airways. They begin shouting orders, calling for an ambulance, and urging each other on as they work frantically, now in the business of salvation: “Pull, pull Abu Ziyad!”

“She opened her eyes!” I don’t know if I’ve ever heard a phrase in my life so close to “He is risen!”

I expect by now you’ve heard the other good news. Today, January 19th, after 469 days of bombardment, starvation, displacement, and murder, a ceasefire has finally been called. The assault is finished. It’s finally over.

Though it didn’t come into effect until today, the deal was announced on Wednesday. As the rumours of a possible deal began to coalesce into something more tangible than before, I couldn’t stop refreshing Al Jazeera, and when Qatar officially announced a deal had been agreed on, well, words can’t describe my elation. Mohammed R. Mhawish, a journalist we met before Christmas, posted: “I am in tears. I am literally crying. For months I’ve dreamt of this moment… Can’t believe it’s finally over.”[2] A world removed, I think I shared a small sliver of that immense joy.

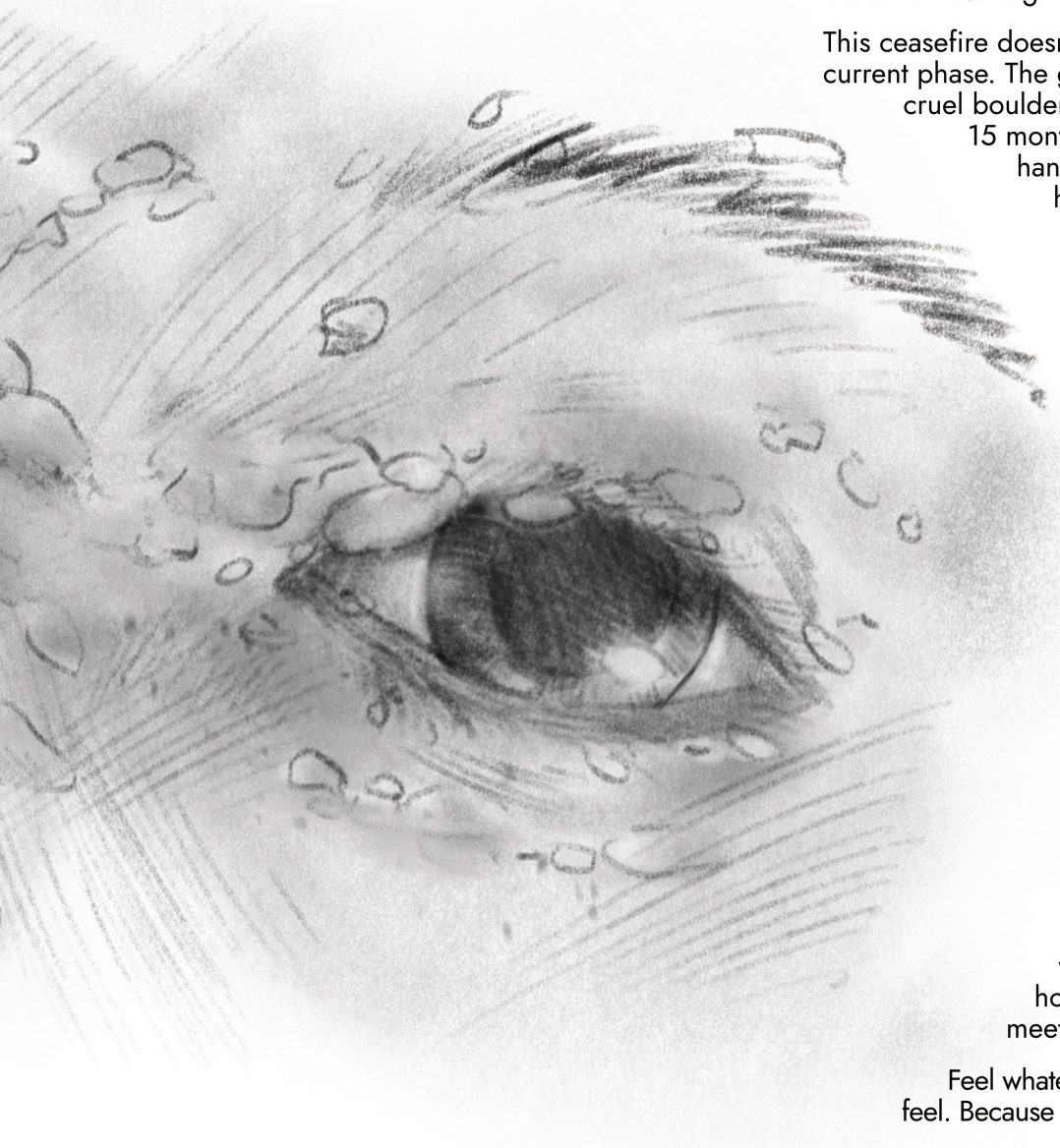
“It’s finally over.”

Likewise, when I saw that girl open her eyes, I was also filled with this uncommon joy. A joy that meant I knew I’d be sharing it with you, that I’d share the video immediately to my social media feed, that I probably wouldn’t forget those eyes any time soon. But that wasn’t the only thing I felt as the rescuers brushed rubble out of her eyelashes.

Because,
sure she
survived this blast,
but what comes next? Who
knows what injuries she has from
the bomb that did this or from the building that
fell on her? Who knows—as Mohammed R. Mhawish also explained[3]—what psychological scars she now bears? Were her parents under the rubble with her? Her grandparents? Her siblings? How many of them, when lifted out of their would-be graves, opened their eyes? Will she find food under Israel’s regime of starvation? Was this her only shelter, and if so, how will she keep warm now that weapons paid for by our taxes have torn it all down around her?

I’m not gonna get into the details of the ceasefire now (see end-notes for an explainer[4]), but I can assure you, it’s

not some simple solution. It's an agreement worked out between a militarized occupying power and a resistance group, backed and cajoled by multiple states with complicated and contradictory interests. It is not, as some news agencies have reported it, a "peace agreement," chiefly because even if it did revert things to how they were on October 6, 2023 (it doesn't), there was no peace then either.



This ceasefire does not end the occupation. It does not end Israeli apartheid. It does not end the 17-year blockade on Gaza. While it does hold some provisions for aid and, in its later stages, rebuilding, today Gaza's hospitals are still destroyed and its doctors imprisoned.[5] Thousands of our neighbours will still die from injuries, preventable illnesses, starvation, and exposure. In the West Bank, Israeli settlers will continue to steal land. Israel and the collaborationist Palestinian Authority will continue attacking Jenin and other refugee camps.[6] Palestinians living in Israel will continue to be treated as second class citizens.

And, likely, if their recent record of post-ceasefire attacks on Lebanon is any indication,[7] this ceasefire won't completely end Israeli aggression on Gaza. If we're being wholly realistic here, there's a possibility that, after the first six-week portion of the agreement, once many of the Israeli captives have been returned, Israel will begin the assault all over again.[8]

This ceasefire doesn't end the genocide, it just ends this current phase. The genocide will continue to roll like a cruel boulder, its momentum the ramifications of 15 months of siege, and we still need all hands on deck to eventually bring it to a halt. And even then, the work isn't done.

I'm not going to tell you how you should feel about this ceasefire. I'm not going to tell you that you shouldn't be cynical, because you have good reason to be. I'm not going to tell you that you shouldn't be furious that Israel killed more than 100 of our neighbours since the ceasefire was announced on Wednesday,[9] including at least 19 more in the 3 hours it was delayed this morning.[10] I'm also not going to tell you that you shouldn't share in the joy of our Gazan neighbours as they took to the street to celebrate, of the journalists taking off that blue press armour they've had to wear all these many months,[11] or of those who are ready to run back to their homes, even with no buildings there to meet them.

Feel whatever you feel—whatever you need to feel. Because here's what I *will* tell you: we're not done.

When that girl opened her eyes, the tired hands digging her out were flooded with newfound energy. The voices of mourning became shouts of joy and action. We don't know what the future holds for her, but today we can say "she opened her eyes!" We don't know what the future—or even the next few days—holds for Palestine, but for once we can say "ceasefire now" in the knowledge that 'now' has finally come. It's time for us to spring with new energy to the task of pulling away rubble, building new futures, and tearing down every last wall of occupation. Today ceasefire, tomorrow liberation. ❧

First published November 3, 2024

Dr. Lamma Mansour

"I think that...we have been deprived of this ability to imagine, that people have said to us: 'this is the reality, just get on with it.' And, no, I think that we can do something else."

- Dr. Lamma Mansour, speaking on the Across the Divide podcast

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled."

- Matthew 5:6, emphasis mine

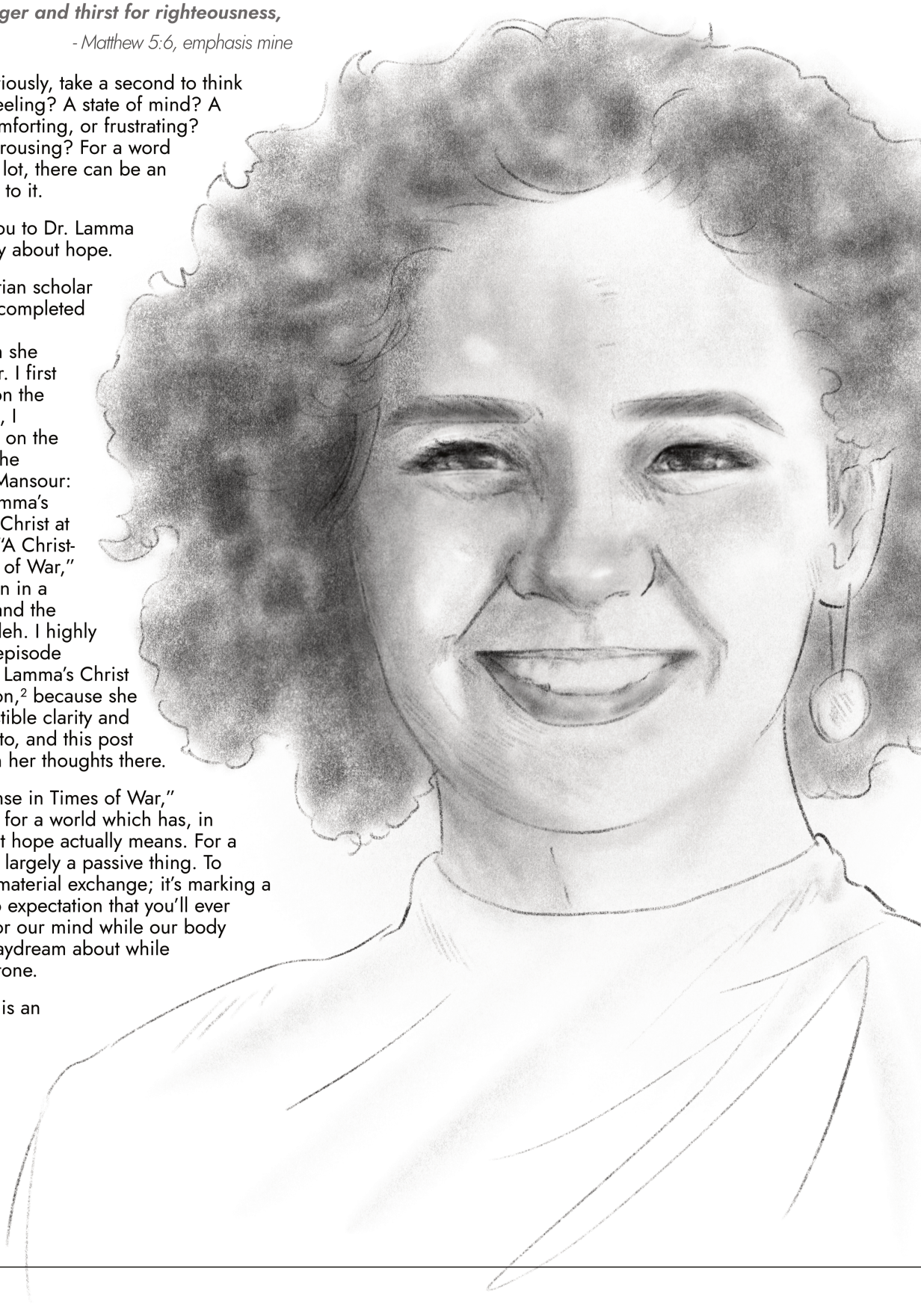
What is hope? Seriously, take a second to think about it. Is it a feeling? A state of mind? A lifestyle? Is it comforting, or frustrating? Is it calming, or rousing? For a word we use an awful lot, there can be an awful vagueness to it.

Today, I'd like to introduce you to Dr. Lamma Mansour, who has a lot to say about hope.

Lamma is a Palestinian Christian scholar from Nazareth who recently completed her PhD in Social Policy and Intervention at Oxford, which she attended as a Rhodes scholar. I first encountered Lamma when, on the recommendation of Mama G, I listened to her recent feature on the Across the Divide podcast. The episode, "CATC #5 Lamma Mansour: Still, Hope,"[1] reproduces Lamma's recent address at the annual Christ at the Checkpoint conference, "A Christ-Centered Response in Times of War," commented and expanded on in a discussion between Lamma and the podcast's host Abeer Shehadeh. I highly recommend listening to the episode yourself, or at least watching Lamma's Christ at the Checkpoint presentation,[2] because she speaks with the sort of irresistible clarity and insight that I can only aspire to, and this post will largely be a reflection on her thoughts there.

In "A Christ-Centered Response in Times of War," Lamma seeks to define hope for a world which has, in so many ways, forgotten what hope actually means. For a lot of people I know, hope is largely a passive thing. To hope for something is an immaterial exchange; it's marking a destination on a map with no expectation that you'll ever actually visit. It's furnishing for our mind while our body stays put. It's something to daydream about while your nose stays at the grindstone.

In Lamma's estimation, hope is an active force. It is first and foremost truthful, being born amongst the rubble of our present realities. It is born of the conviction that things do not need to be this way, and that we can actually change them. Not, "that would be nice, but there's no fighting human nature," not, "we've tried it before, and it won't work," but rather the recognition that, in telling courageous truths, we can overcome the mistakes of the past. And fundamentally, it's more than just talk or daydream—it's also the willingness, driven by our convictions, to start building this better reality now.



For Christians, this type of hope *should* be very familiar. Lamma reminds us of the "now and not yet" central to our faith—that Christ's example is one of breaking into present reality and of coming again, and that we in turn need to be working to improve our present and look forward to restoration in our future. But I'll freely echo Lamma in saying that this just isn't what I see in most of the church today.

So many of us are too happy to minimize the "now" in favour of the "not yet." We imagine our purpose on Earth is to flip the switch of salvation, after which point we impatiently await rapture. For some, that's quite literal, but for most, I'm mainly talking about the way we let our faith, which could be our most compelling force of change for the sake of our neighbours, become a placating panacea. We have personal relationships with God that allow us to better weather the storms of our own lives. We read devotionals that encourage us to become more faithful. We are more than happy to pray for all the wars and rumours of wars, but, let's be honest, how often are they out of our minds by the time we hit coffee hour?

We want the peace that surpasses all understanding, but we don't know what to do when Christ says "I have not come to bring peace, but a sword" (Matthew 10:34b)—when we are called out of our comfort zones into places of division, conflict, and costly solidarity.

For Lamma, Hope is the answer. She quotes theologian Jürgen Moltmann, who said that "faith, wherever it develops into hope, causes not rest but unrest, not patience but impatience. It does not calm the unquiet heart but is itself this unquiet heart in man. Those who hope in Christ can no longer put up with reality as it is, but begin to suffer under it, to contradict it." Hope is, by definition, a challenge to the way things are right now. If we genuinely have faith in God's power and our calling as co-labourers, then hope should spur us on through this discomfort.

Now, while this is great and true, I think even those of us who believe we *should* do something often fall at the hurdle of believing that we *can* do something. Like David, we are filled with a thirst for righteousness, but when we see the Goliaths of the institutions that make up our world, we figure maybe herding sheep is all we're cut out for.

And look, I get it. There are some things that seem too big, too impenetrable, too much like they've always been that way and always will, for us to feel like we can do anything. For this place we call the Holy Land, the most common narrative I hear is one of perpetual violence; we hear stories from thousands of years ago, of Isaac and Ishmael, of Judea and Samaria—and stories from just last week—of war, and acceptable casualties, and tragic but unavoidable losses—that make our hearts hurt, and we imagine it must always be that way. If we take a moment to look at the frothing wake all around us, it's a lot easier hold on to a semblance of comfort and wait for rescue than it is to risk letting go of the boat, even to save our neighbours who actually are drowning.

"We need to do this work of imagination, not to be sentimental or to escape reality—again, hope is honest—but because if we fail to do so, others will fill the gap. Others will take up the task of imagining for us."

This is where Lamma reminds us of what is, in my opinion, the most important part of hope:

"Hope gives us the power to imagine a different reality. It allows us to think, what would the kingdom coming in this land look like? What does it smell like? What does it feel like? What does liberation look like? This is important because what we do today is shaped by what we believe the future can be. We are hope-shaped creatures. We need to do this work of imagination, not to be sentimental or to escape reality—again, hope is honest—but because if we fail to do so, others will fill the gap. Others will take up the task of imagining for us."

The truth is, those narratives that often feel the most fundamental are also the hollowest. Those who speak to us about "perpetual violence" collapse the nuanced history of Palestine and the imminently understandable mechanisms of colonialism and imperialism into a simplistic falsehood which is easily consumable and, crucially, easily ignorable.

The moment we accept imaginations of the powerful as our only reality, our hope shrivels into daydreams. It is our responsibility to hope more compassionately, more truthfully, more holistically, and more collaboratively, refusing the cheap and shallow imaginations we have been handed. Hope is about recognizing with lament the truths of our current realities, then stating with our hearts, our souls, our minds, and our bodies, that something better is possible, and we are willing to fight for it.

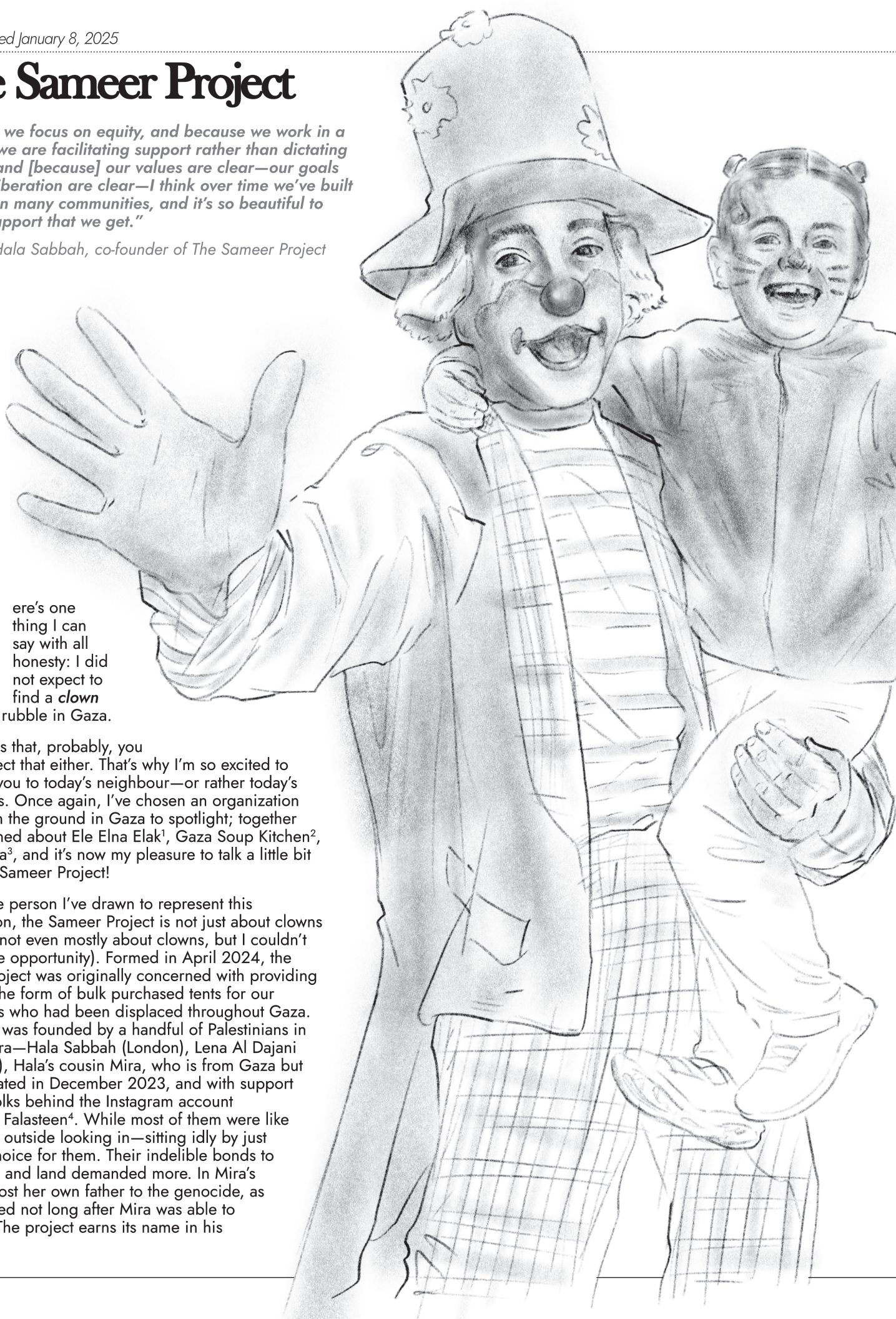
My challenge then, is to ask yourself whether you actually believe in a God who can move mountains. Do you actually believe that God is able to do far more than we can ever ask or imagine? If you do, I believe he has a place for you in this work. If you don't, I want to meet you not with shame but with encouragement. Examine the narratives you've been asked to believe, and the imaginations you've adopted as your own—begin to name the Goliaths that stand before you, and look closely to see if they are grounded in a foundation of love and compassion, and perhaps instead you'll find that their feet are made of clay after all. And then look to those like Lamma—like so many of our neighbours—who are taking clear, measured steps toward that stormy sea, confident that they will be able to cross it. Maybe you'll find the inspiration you need to step out of the boat. ❧

First published January 8, 2025

The Sameer Project

"Because we focus on equity, and because we work in a way that we are facilitating support rather than dictating support, and [because] our values are clear—our goals towards liberation are clear—I think over time we've built trust within many communities, and it's so beautiful to see the support that we get."

- Hala Sabbah, co-founder of The Sameer Project

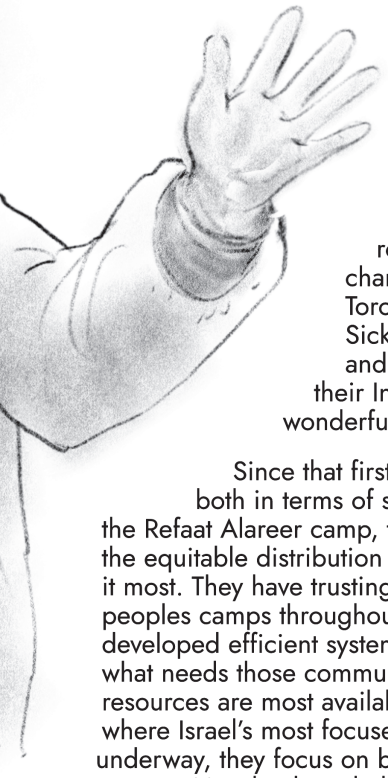


Here's one thing I can say with all honesty: I did not expect to find a ***clown*** amidst the rubble in Gaza.

My guess is that, probably, you didn't expect that either. That's why I'm so excited to introduce you to today's neighbour—or rather today's neighbours. Once again, I've chosen an organization working on the ground in Gaza to spotlight; together we've learned about Ele Elna Elak[1], Gaza Soup Kitchen[2], and Thamra[3], and it's now my pleasure to talk a little bit about The Sameer Project!

Despite the person I've drawn to represent this organization, the Sameer Project is not just about clowns (really, it's not even mostly about clowns, but I couldn't pass up the opportunity). Formed in April 2024, the Sameer Project was originally concerned with providing shelter in the form of bulk purchased tents for our neighbours who had been displaced throughout Gaza. The group was founded by a handful of Palestinians in the diaspora—Hala Sabbah (London), Lena Al Dajani (California), Hala's cousin Mira, who is from Gaza but was evacuated in December 2023, and with support from the folks behind the Instagram account Translating Falasteen[4]. While most of them were like us—on the outside looking in—sitting idly by just wasn't a choice for them. Their indelible bonds to the people and land demanded more. In Mira's case, she lost her own father to the genocide, as he was killed not long after Mira was able to evacuate. The project earns its name in his memory.

Their first endeavour was a camp in Rafah for children who had been discharged early from Gaza's overwhelmed hospitals—not because they no longer needed treatment, but because there just wasn't enough space to treat all the thousands of injured children, let alone the adults. This camp, now named the Refaat Alareer camp[5] after the beloved Gazan poet we met a few months ago in Imago Palestina[6], is still one of the Sameer Project's main focuses; it's composed of roughly 25 families at a time, though some rotate through based on their changing circumstances. For my Torontonian readers, this is basically the Sick Kids Hospital of refugee camps, and I'd encourage you to check out their Instagram[7] to meet some of their wonderful and courageous residents.



Since that first camp, they've expanded rapidly both in terms of services and geography. Aside from the Refaat Alareer camp, the pillar of the Sameer Project is the equitable distribution of resources to the folks who need it most. They have trusting partnerships with displaced peoples camps throughout southern Gaza[8] where they've developed efficient systems of doling out supplies based on what needs those communities have identified and what resources are most available at the time. In northern Gaza, where Israel's most focused ethnic cleansing campaign is still underway, they focus on bringing supplies to the isolated communities that have held their ground[9]—communities that many of the large NGOs have stopped attending to because of Israel's constant attacks on aid workers.

Beyond resources, they also work with local communities and talented individuals within those communities (such as our clown here) to provide a vast array of services, including but not limited to: community kitchens, medical treatment, dental treatment, barber services, water trucks, firewood delivery, personal care & disease prevention workshops, and mental health booster days for children. I saw this clown holding this smiling girl in a video from the latter, and I don't think I can properly describe the joy it brought me to see these kids laughing and singing for once.

Now, I said earlier that the group is led by folks in the diaspora, so at this point you may be wondering two things. One, why didn't I just draw one of those founders (why the clown)? And two, how are they able to do all this great work despite being, like ourselves, thousands of kilometres away?

Both questions find their answer in the thing that's most special about the Sameer project: while the founding team may facilitate its work, the hands and feet that are really making the difference are those in the communities being served. The "they" I've been referring to this whole time is a dedicated team of volunteers on the ground in Gaza, serving their neighbours directly.

Now I'm not saying this is a unique strength—the other groups I've highlighted use roughly the same system as well—but it is what's to credit for the diversity of the services that the Sameer Project can offer.

There's a lot that you and I can do for our neighbours in Palestine, but at the end of the day, we are still looking at them through a telescope. It's hard to tell what needs are going unmet or what opportunity is open, and even harder to respond efficiently.

Moreover, we can't see what systems of care are being built and need reinforcing if we're not experiencing their successes and failures firsthand. This is one of the main failings of large international NGOs that work in Palestine—they're there for relief, and they will be able to do it to greater and lesser degrees, but they're not there for building. They're not there for resisting occupation and colonialism by building self-sufficiency and mutual solidarity.

But every neighbour who helps another with her tent, every relationship built through equitable giving, every isolated family connected with a web of community, and yes, every clown who dons face paint to make the children of Refaat Alareer camp smile, is a seed that will grow a garden of *sumud*.[10]

For us, way out here, international solidarity doesn't mean micromanaging our neighbours' resilience, nor does it mean driving ourselves mad trying to make impossible decisions about who deserves our help. It means equipping our neighbours to meet their needs in the ways only they know how to meet them. It means giving them the resources they need to build a better reality than colonialism and genocide. It means forging bonds founded in trust, and choosing to put our faith in that.

Pray with your hands

The Sameer Project continues its vital work–even more vital at time of publication as Israel's policy of enforced famine drives the millions of people in Gaza to the worst levels of starvation.

You can support the Sameer Project's work right now by donating to one of their campaigns at Linktr.ee/TheSameerProject

Dr. Samah Jabr

"I try to help them explore the battlefield that is their reality, before they make an informed choice within their own struggle to speak sense to power."

- Dr. Samah Jabr

Today, across Canada, people are talking (sometimes with a huge advertisement budget) about mental health. I thought it'd be the perfect time to talk about the mental health of our neighbours in Palestine, and for a while I've been looking forward to talking about this particular neighbour.

Today I'd like to introduce you to Dr. Samah Jabr! Dr. Samah is a consultant psychiatrist from Jerusalem who has decades of experience in psychiatry and mental health, including 9 years of service as the head of the Mental Health unit at the Palestinian Ministry of Health. In her time, she's met with so many in her communities whose minds are scarred and in need of relief—patients who are suicidal, who live with profound and constant depression, who fear to even have their names written on her chart because something bad might happen to them. In other spaces, these symptoms might be treated as signs of PTSD, Major Depressive Disorder, or Paranoia, but Dr. Samah is quick to point out the nuance in the situation.

If we want to find real healing, in ourselves and our communities, we need to commit to the slow work of changing our world for the better, relying not on our own strength, but on each other.

See, the thing is, a lot of modern psychiatry is based on treating disordered thinking and behaviour. Maybe you're anxious even though there's no real danger, or depressed even though you have lots of loving support. Whatever it is, the way you're feeling and acting doesn't match up with the stimulus around you, so you need a doctor to help figure out which wires are crossed. It's about an incongruity—everything on the outside is normal, but you still feel bad, so there must be something going wrong on the inside. But for so many of our neighbours, that incongruity just isn't the case.

In those brief examples of patients I gave earlier, we can see this clearly. *Save the Children* found, in 2022, that four out of five children in Gaza say they're living with depression, grief, and fear[1] (I can only wonder what that percentage is now) as a result of being blockaded and besieged. In an article for Middle East Eye[2], Dr. Samah shares the story of an elderly man who was suicidal due to the fact that the Israeli occupation had forced him "to demolish - with his own hands - the home he had built 20 years earlier." In the same article, she tells of the patient who wouldn't let her write their real name on their file, not from a paranoid delusion, but because occupation forces might reasonably be expected to spy on a famous doctor's records.

Likewise, Dr. Samah spoke to the Guardian last year about PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) and how this medical model relates to the trauma experienced by our neighbours in Gaza—or rather, how it fails to account for how there's really no "post" to their trauma:

"The clinical description of PTSD captures the experience of, for example, a soldier who goes back home…Trauma in Palestine is collective and continuous. PTSD is when your mind is stuck in a traumatic loop. In Palestine, the loop is reality. The threat is still there. Hypervigilance, avoidance – these symptoms of PTSD are unhelpful to the soldier who went home, but for Palestinians, they can save your life. We see this more as 'chronic' traumatic stress disorder."[3]

As we enter into a period of ceasefire (in Gaza at least[4]), we may imagine that the trauma is past. But for Palestinians who know that this semblance of calm depends on the whims of the powerful—for Palestinian children who can count their age by how many wars they've lived through[5]—the threat is never really gone. What do we say for our neighbours who are suffering in mind and spirit, even if it's not all creditable to an imbalance of serotonin? Don't they deserve to be well, too?

While our neighbours in Palestine experience a particularly acute form of this phenomenon, the truth is, all of our mental health is wrapped up in systems of power. It's not surprising when the person who experiences racism struggles with depression, or when someone in poverty has an addiction, or when a closeted trans child has suicidal ideations, and these aren't things that you can so easily solve with Cipralex and CBT. In Canada in particular, our own colonial project gives us one particularly salient example[6]: the reason there's a mental health crisis among Indigenous youth in the North isn't because it's dark up there; it's because of decades of chronic under-funding to (and resource extraction from) Indigenous communities, and the ongoing generational trauma of residential schools, the sixties scoop, and the millennium scoop, just to scratch the surface.

And of course, even those who don't experience the most direct harms of these systems of oppression can find their mental health challenges rooted in the harm these systems do. Just look to the street outreach workers who have to watch their friends and neighbours die due to evil drug policies, or the nurse who's burnt out from back-to-back shifts because her government chose to spend less on healthcare and more on campaign ads. Look to the Palestinians in the diaspora and their allies who've had to watch a genocide for the past 15 months…and then get asked "how's it going?" If you don't treat the root causes, there's only so much 'better' one can get.

For Dr. Samah, operating humanely within this cruel framework requires acknowledging reality and rejecting dominant and dominating approaches to psychiatry and wellness:

"As a psychiatrist, I have the power to side with power, to give diagnoses, and to medicate. If necessary, I can write a report to hinder or exempt people from legal responsibility.

Many times, I must summarise a patient's complex story into the simple code of the International Classification of Diseases, because the establishment understands only the code. But I take the risk to speak sense to power."[2]

While she knows that she as a psychiatrist can't overcome the root causes behind a patient's suffering when they are found, as they so often are, in systems of oppression. But she also acknowledges that there is much value in truth telling and in

strategizing. Her practice is one of helping "people make sense of their painful experiences by creating an explanatory, validating narrative that gathers the complexity of their situation and negotiates their conflict with oppressive powers, rather than labelling them with a diagnostic code."[2]

In a way, while it might not hew exactly with the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, this too is a process of diagnosis. If we know the sickness, then maybe we can find a cure. For our neighbours in Palestine, this can help them resist the crushing weight of oppression—to help them survive the forces that seek to shrink, hide, remove, and kill them, and also to help develop creative ways of dismantling these forces.

For us on the outside, it's a reminder that all our liberation is intertwined. If you're broken down and miserable over the state of the world, you're absolutely right to be! The solution isn't to warp yourself by apathy or individualist thinking into the small space you've been given. It might be easier, but it is not better. If we want to find real healing, in ourselves and our communities, we need to commit to the slow work of changing our world for the better, relying not on our own strength, but on each other.

"Giving people who lost their humanity, people were reduced to nothing, giving them their dignity back...Psychologists can't do that alone. We need responses at state and international level. We need the rest of the world to stand with us."[3] ❧

Motaz Imad Mousa Abu Tabeekh

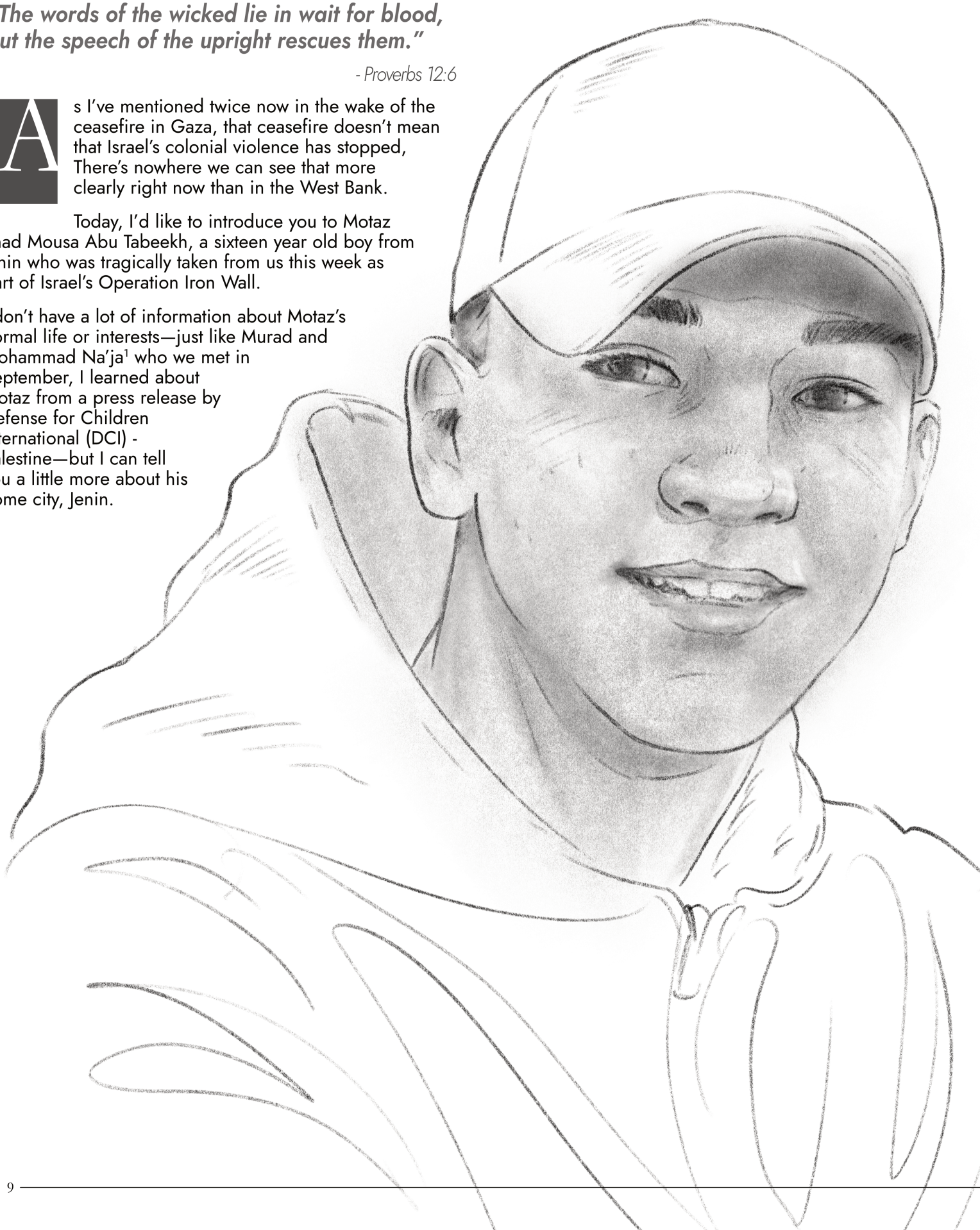
"The words of the wicked lie in wait for blood, but the speech of the upright rescues them."

- Proverbs 12:6

As I've mentioned twice now in the wake of the ceasefire in Gaza, that ceasefire doesn't mean that Israel's colonial violence has stopped, There's nowhere we can see that more clearly right now than in the West Bank.

Today, I'd like to introduce you to Motaz Imad Mousa Abu Tabeekh, a sixteen year old boy from Jenin who was tragically taken from us this week as part of Israel's Operation Iron Wall.

I don't have a lot of information about Motaz's normal life or interests—just like Murad and Mohammad Na'ja[1] who we met in September, I learned about Motaz from a press release by Defense for Children International (DCI) - Palestine—but I can tell you a little more about his home city, Jenin.



16-year-old boy. Martyred on January 21, 2025

Jenin is one of the West Bank's most northern cities, located in Area A of the occupied territories, which places it under the control of the Palestinian Authority.[2] Part of the city consists of the Jenin refugee camp which houses roughly 24 000 Palestinian refugees who were forced out of their homes in historic Palestine during the 1948 Nakba[3]—that's where Motaz's family lives. Jenin is a vibrant hub of Palestinian culture, cuisine, and art—including being the home of the renowned Freedom Theatre[4]—and is also the locus for a lot of resistance movements, armed and otherwise, meaning that it faces a great deal of repression and violence from the Israeli military and Palestinian Authority forces.

For the past few months, Jenin has been the site of an intense assault by these combined forces which, after the Gaza ceasefire, has now metastasized into Israel's new focus: Operation Iron Wall. The operation, which consists of ground raids, air, helicopter, and drone strikes, sniper attacks, and confrontations with resistance forces, has wreaked havoc on the Jenin refugee camp. As of time of writing, West Bank journalist Mariam Barghouti[5] reports that 16 Palestinians have been killed as part of Operation Iron Wall;[6] that includes multiple children, such as Motaz and a two year old girl. Dozens more have been injured. Just like in Gaza, the Israeli military has extensively damaged water and power lines, and has also tightened its grip elsewhere throughout the West Bank, meaning that travel for Palestinians—already a nightmare due to checkpoints and segregated roads—has been even more stifled; at least one woman, Iman Jaradat from Hebron, died when her ambulance was held up by the new restrictions. UN rapporteur on the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Francesca Albanese, has warned that if this aggression "is not forced to stop, Israel's genocide of Palestinians will not be confined to Gaza."[7]

While Netanyahu and other Israeli authorities have claimed that Iron Wall is a necessary aggression to counter "terrorism," we've all seen this song and dance before. Removing the acts of armed resistance groups from historical context, they will fear-monger until they have the support of Western powers and uninformed everyday people, and then brutalize entire Palestinian communities with impunity. The goal isn't peace and safe co-habitation, but ethnic cleansing and subjugation—Netanyahu himself made this clear when he called the West Bank "Samaria" in his announcement of the operation. We can't fall for this charade. We know the truth, as we have seen it play out for 15 months and 76 years before that.

The truth is that around noon on January 21, Motaz, an innocent child, was shot by an Israeli sniper. After being rushed to Ibn Sina Specialized Hospital for emergency surgery, he was pronounced dead at 2pm. Operation Iron Wall began at noon, and, despite being nowhere near any confrontation between Israeli and resistance forces, Motaz was one of its first casualties.

It's almost as if the Israeli military wants to be able to sell a story of soldiers surgically picking off terrorists hiding in the community. But the truth is, all this surgical efficiency, that's the terror. These kids are gunned down by hidden assailants.

Motaz didn't see his attacker, but his attacker saw him.

DCI Palestine posts press releases, often multiple times a week, for Palestinian children killed in the occupied territories. When you read through them, you begin to see a pattern. Usually—not always, but often enough—it's a young man, old enough to look like maybe he could be an adult, out on his roof at night, or walking in an impoverished area. It's almost as if the Israeli military wants to be able to sell a story of soldiers surgically picking off terrorists hiding in the community—like they want the plausible deniability granted by the image people have in their heads of a "terrorist," a young Arab man crouching in the shadows, so that rather than asking "did they just murder a(nother) child" we'll ask "well what *was* he doing on the roof at night?" But the truth is, all this surgical efficiency, that's the terror. These kids are gunned down by hidden assailants—snipers, drones, a team hidden in the treeline outside a kindergarten.[8] Motaz didn't see his attacker, but his attacker saw him.

The violence of Israel's occupation is one of bombs and bullets, but it's also one of ideas. Netanyahu's Iron Wall isn't just about crushing resistance, it's also about making us all believe that security demands blood—and who cares if that blood comes from children; they're not our children, are they? But we can't fall for these narratives—we can't let them separate us. They *are* our children, and they *are* our neighbours. And together, armed with this truth, we will tear down every dividing wall. ❧

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RAJEEN, RETURN!

"Lift up your eyes and look around: They all gather and come to you; your sons will come from afar, and your daughters will be carried on the arm.

They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated; they will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations."

- Isaiah 60:4 & 61:4

I hope you've seen some of the videos coming out of Gaza this last week. Images of corridors of people, not pushed from behind by tanks but marching confidently back along the sea to their homes. Tears shed not in mourning but in pure, unbridlable joy, as family, friends, and neighbours who haven't seen each other in up to fifteen months—many who thought they may never see each other again—cling to each other like a prayer to never be separated. The captives finally set free of their chains, met with shouts of joy by the communities and loved ones that had so long felt their absence.

Even in cases like that last one, where the Israeli government specifically refused to allow freed Palestinian captives any "public displays of joy,"[1] there's only so much you can do to stop a wave of joy this powerful, this genuine, and this widely spread through empathetic neighbours throughout the world.

PALESTINIAN JOY IS A BEAUTIFUL THING

In the past week, with the first phase of this very fragile ceasefire already approaching one third completion, our neighbours who had been displaced to the south of Gaza have finally begun the journeys back to their homes—and to whatever they may find there. This hasn't been easy, quick, or safe. Travel is hard enough already for everyone, as vehicles beyond animal-drawn wagons are virtually nonexistent, but for the hundreds of thousands of injured, disabled, and elderly Gazans, the trek is especially an ordeal. Israel still maintains a military presence on the Netzarim corridor separating Gaza's north and south, meaning that the thousands of people returning to the north have to wait to pass through what is now the biggest checkpoint in occupied Palestine. While the five hundred thousand strong crowd of displaced Gazans is now finally moving through this checkpoint, the week began with Israeli soldiers opening fire multiple on returning Palestinians, killing two and wounding nine others.[2]

FOR MANY, THIS RETURN SERVES ONLY AS A FORETASTE OF THE FEAST STILL FAR OFF.

I began this project by sharing the story of Isam Hamad, a Palestinian organizer who helped start the Great March of Return in 2018. For those of you who haven't heard Isam's story (I'd urge you to check it out[3]), this peaceful protest was, for Isam, a manifestation of one of the Palestinian people's core demands: "let us go home." It's a demand that is enshrined in international law—UN resolution 194 states that "refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practical date"[4]—but, to me, it's also just something that is fundamentally understandable, isn't it?

For us Christians, 'return' is something that is inseparably woven through so much of our theology, our upbringing, and the stories we tell each other and about each other. Some would argue that the central pillar of the Christian faith is of returning to a right relationship with God, and of realizing that it's never too late to return. But beyond that, in more tangible ways, our scriptures are full of real hopes, doubts, fears, and promises about returning. This we share with our Jewish siblings, as so much of the Jewish writing that became our Old Testament and influenced our founding apostles (and Christ himself) was written in and about the process of returning from exile. We probably wouldn't have the Bible at all if faithful Jews exiled to Babylon didn't dream of returning home and want to make those dreams tangible.

I quoted one of these tangible dreams at the outset of this message because I think it's an irresistible image of hope for this moment, and because it so beautifully lays plain the connections between us and our neighbours today and our ancestors two and half thousand years ago. My critics will say that I'm taking those verses out of context, that these promises were for the restoration of Israel, and perhaps even argue that this 76-year colonial project is the realization of this return. But I'd challenge them to reconsider what context really means.

When the prophet, in the voice of God, addresses Israel, he's not talking to a modern nation state—known in Hebrew as Medinat Israel[5]—but rather, the members of his community whose faith and identity was being forged and reforged in the crucible of exile—Am Yisrael. To me, the context that's most relevant is these experiences, shared across centuries, and the way in which we believe God shows up for those pushed to the margins. As a Christian, I am not ashamed of believing that God's people includes all people, and that God's redemptive power is most often shown in the poor, the chained, and the oppressed—just as Christ himself did when he read from this same text to his own community (Luke 4:16-20).

We can't accept the Zionist narratives of a return which demands exclusivity and ethnic cleansing, even if they're built on interpretations of these same passages. We need to insist wholeheartedly on God's promises of compassion, not conquest, new life, not suffocation—and that these promises are for all his people. The book of Isaiah is a call to remember the responsibility of living in community together, the consequences for choosing power, wealth, and self-interest over the love of neighbour and care for the oppressed, and the need for justice to return just as the prophet envisions people returning to their lands. Some 2500 years removed, God still walks with those who wander in exile, who long for restoration, and who nonetheless prepare to return to ruined cities.

It's for this reason that I, once again, hope you've seen some of the videos coming out of Gaza this week. Images of land as far as the eye can see—basically all of Rafah, once Biden's "red line"—reduced to rubble.[6] Tears of disappointment and disorientation as our neighbours return to find a heap of garbage where their beloved home once stood, or the graveyard where they buried their mother and grandmother completely bulldozed.[7] The wailing and lament for 15-year old Zakariya Humaid Yahya Barbakh[8] who was shot multiple times by an Israeli sniper (who also fired on the man who dove in to rescue Zakariya) on the second day of the ceasefire.

WE NEED TO CELEBRATE THE JOY OF RETURN, BUT WE SHOULDN'T SUGAR-COAT IT.

This is not the return that Isam marched for or our Palestinian neighbours in the diaspora pray for. This is a return, back into the wreckage of genocide, under the thumb of occupation, within a fragile truce which may still not last more than a few more weeks. I wonder if our neighbours embracing each other at the central checkpoint held so tight because they don't know how long they'll be able to hold on this time.

And yet, with our ancestors returning from exile in Babylon, and our church mothers and fathers who laboured to build a kingdom community worthy of Christ's return, I have faith in what this foretaste promises. Taste and see with all of your senses, but don't be satisfied yet. It's our job to march confidently along the sea together, sure of our destination, and working to sew seeds of liberation every step of the way.

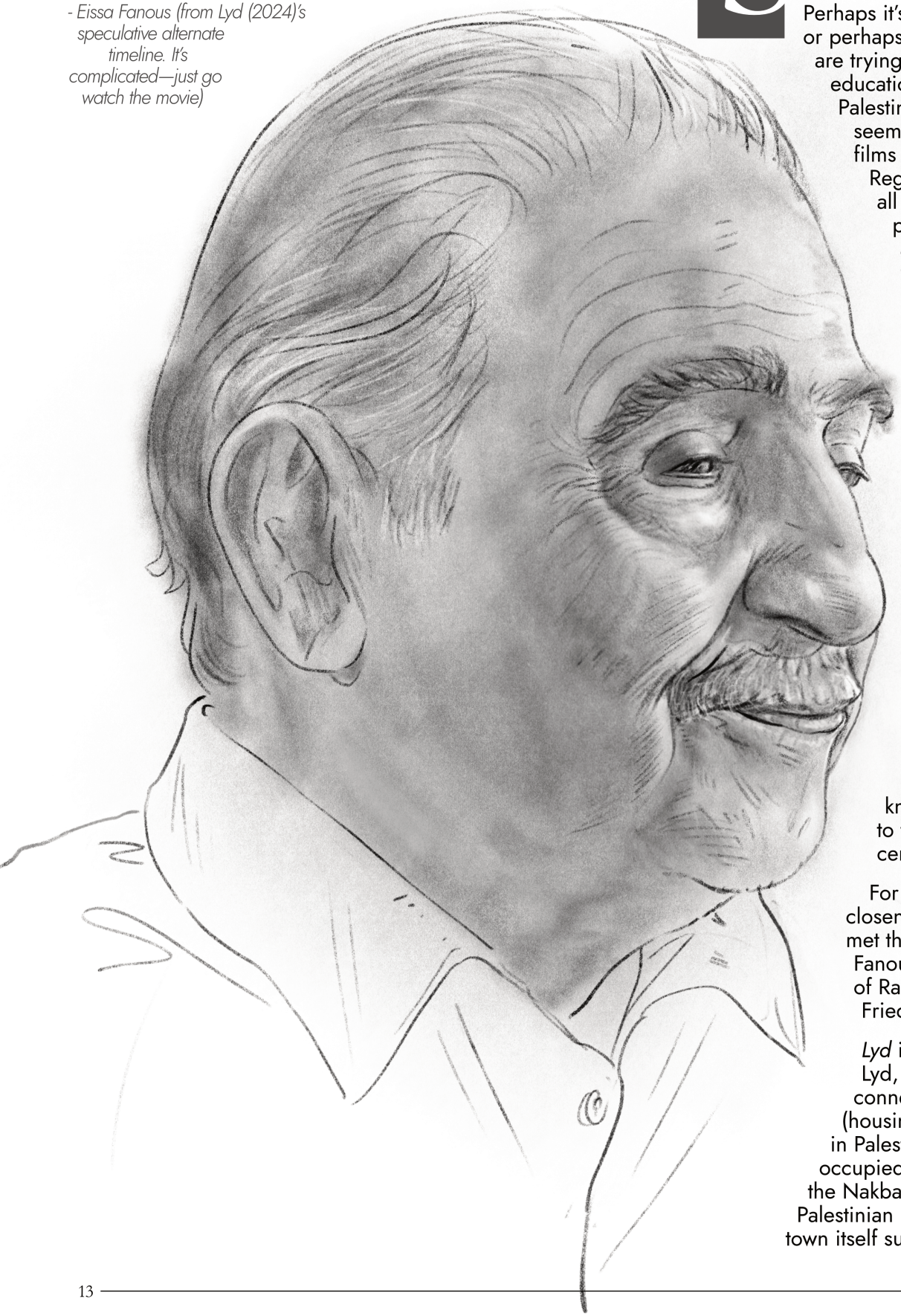
"He asked me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" I said, "Sovereign Lord, you alone know." (Ezekiel 37:3)

First published February 9, 2025

Eissa Fanous

"You know, this is the only sculpture of St. George where he actually looks like a dark-skinned person from the East, not a crusading white man."

- Eissa Fanous (from Lyd (2024)'s speculative alternate timeline. It's complicated—just go watch the movie)



So, for some reason, February has become a really great month for Palestinian movies in Toronto.

Perhaps it's because of the weather, or perhaps Palestine solidarity groups are trying to put more focus into education now that the situation in Palestine has shifted, but there seem to be screenings of great films once or twice a week. Regardless of the reason, I'm all for it; despite finding my passion in drawing, I actually have a degree in film! And if the rationale for this influx is a focus on education, I think it's a great idea.

While we can get a lot of information quite clearly through news articles and blog posts, there's a certain closeness that film provides that is hard to find in many other mediums. Renowned French director and film theorist, André Bazin, argued that film was the closest we'd ever get to a faithful artistic reproduction of the profundity of reality, and was therefore the pinnacle of all arts. I don't know if I'd be quite so quick to the superlatives, but he was certainly on to *something*.

For instance, I felt this closeness very strongly when I met this week's neighbour, Eissa Fanous, in the flickering cellulite of Rami Younis & Sarah Ema Friedland's *Lyd* (2023).

Lyd is a story about the city of Lyd, once a bustling and connected Palestinian town (housing one of the first airports in Palestine) before it was occupied by Israeli forces during the Nakba of 1948, most of its Palestinian residents expelled, and the town itself subsumed into Israel (now

called Lod). We encounter the city's story, past and present, primarily through interviews with its current and former residents—the first being an elderly artist named Eissa.

Eissa, who sadly passed away before the film debuted, was a Palestinian Christian and Nakba survivor who was born in Lyd. He was 12 years old when Israeli soldiers came to his city. He's an artist, working in illustration and sculpture, and in the film we have the opportunity to see some of his work—a few delicate drawings of Jesus and, most notably, a statue of St. George, who Eissa takes great pains to remind us is believed to be of Lydian heritage. His work is lovely, but it's clear by the modest exhibition that this passion has not brought him any prestige.

"It was a shock to us because we have not talked about this before...Yet, once Eissa started talking, it was like a flood. He kept this locked inside for so long."

As the documentary opens, he tells the harrowing story of being forced by Israeli soldiers to remove the decomposing bodies of his neighbours who were killed in the Dahmash Mosque massacre. The massacre, in which the Israeli Palmach militia claimed the lives of more than 100 civilians[1] sheltering inside the mosque, was only one part of the ethnic cleansing of Lyd, itself only one part of the larger Nakba. In later interviews (and in the Q&A after my screening of Lyd), co-director Rami Younis explains how, while they interviewed Eissa for his experience as a Nakba survivor, they didn't know anything about this story before filming—nor did his family. Rami recalls:

"It was a shock to us because we have not talked about this before. We are grateful for him for sharing that account and for speaking up. It was very hard for him. He wanted to speak but was very traumatized. Yet, once Eissa started talking, it was like a flood. He kept this locked inside for so long."[2]

While I was, of course, immediately struck by the horror of his story, I was also struck by how much he reminded me of my grandad. There were a few visual similarities—both unassuming, worn, elderly men—but it was this outpouring of story that was the real similarity. My grandad was born in Hong Kong and was eight when the Japanese invaded and occupied the region during World War Two. Grandad and his family were apprehended and put in a prisoner-of-war camp for about three years, where mistreatment and conditions of scarcity would leave trauma that influenced who he was for the rest of his life. But just looking at him, you would never imagine he had that in his past. He didn't like to talk about it, but when he did, the stories would flow out like it was yesterday.

There's something about these stories, locked away in aging bodies, that frustrates me. Maybe it's the fact that they're so easy to lose. I certainly don't remember everything my grandad told me, and what he told me is certainly not everything that happened. Eissa was able to finally tell his story of the Nakba, but how many others have died with this vital history locked in their hearts? How many are still alive but are too beaten down by constant invalidation and erasure to believe their story has any value any more?

Film, like any medium of communication, is about telling stories, but I think a strength of film is how it can tell these types of stories so eloquently. The faithful reproduction that Bazin so prizes puts us on the couch next to Eissa, listening to the floodgates open. It sits us on the rubble 20 years ago in Jenin to hear a child's firsthand account of the raid which levelled her home in *Jenin, Jenin* (2002). It shoves us between armed Israeli settlers and Palestinian farmers struggling to hold on to their land in *No Other Land* (2024). It brings us into the Israeli police interrogation room as teenage activist Ahed Tamimi stands up to the occupation's threats in *Where Olive Trees Weep* (2024). It carries us past the blockade into the heart of Israel's genocide through the lenses of dozens of artists and journalists trying to stay alive in Gaza in *From Ground Zero* (2024), *Bisan* (2024), and *Ahmad Alive* (2024). It puts us face to face with the faces behind the headlines.

I'm reminded of the wisdom of Dr. Lamma Mansour. From her presentation at last year's Christ at the Checkpoint conference: "We need to do this work of imagination, not to be sentimental or to escape reality...but because if we fail to do so, others will fill the gap. Others will take up the task of imagining for us."[3] She talks about imagination, but I think her words ring just as true for stories more broadly. For 76 years and for 15 months, powerful people have been trying to push their stories on the world, trying to erase or truncate history, trying to validate the necessity of imperial violence and occupation. Just this past week, US President Trump has pitched his own story for Palestine, one which casts ethnic cleansing as voluntary migration, the ravaged habitations of Gaza as a construction site, and our neighbours' beloved homes as the future location of the newest Trump resort. It's in times like these that we most need to hear the stories of the real people whose lives are in the balance.

It is our Palestinian neighbours who will decide the future of Palestine. We owe it to them to begin uprooting the counterfeit stories we've been handed down and make space for deeper roots and the nourishment they bring. ❧

First published February 16, 2025

Mahmoud Muna

"This is not my personal wishlist of a library. This is a bookstore that presents different voices along different political lines for different readership to read and learn things that they did not know."

- Mahmoud Muna, speaking to NPR

We live in a big, confusing world, and sometimes it feels like it's just getting more and more confusing every day. The things we experience in the stories we hear can become overwhelming, if we don't have the tools to contextualize them. This week, I'd like to introduce you to someone who has a lot of experience with making these tools accessible, and of the challenges that come with sharing knowledge under occupation.

Mahmoud Muna lives in occupied East Jerusalem, where he's the proprietor of the world-renowned "Educational Bookshop." The shop is a family business, founded in 1984, and its two mirrored locations on Salah Eddin Street are managed by Mahmoud and his brother Ahmad. In its 41 years of existence it's become a well loved institution in East Jerusalem. This is partly because of the wide diversity of books stocked by Muna, including a vast quantity of books in English, making it a common destination for international travellers. You can find just about anything at the Educational Bookshop, from the newest issue of *Jewish Currents*, to historical and political tomes by writers like Ilan Pappé and Noam Chompsky, to illustrated guides on Palestine's gorgeous landscapes, to *Harry Potter* and Shakespeare. It's also earned this glowing reputation for being a hub of literary culture in Palestine, and the Middle East more broadly, with the Muna family and their store playing host to countless readings, book launches, and community events.

We can't fight ignorance by putting up more walls—on the contrary, it is out of ignorance that we put up walls in the first place.

Despite (or perhaps because of) this renown, the Educational Bookshop found itself this week as the locus of Israel's most recent form of crackdowns.

On Monday, Mahmoud was behind the counter, showing his 11-year old daughter the ropes of the family business, while his brother, Ahmad, manned the sister branch across the street. Around 3pm, plainclothes Israeli police began filing into the store, picking up books with words like "Palestine" or "occupation" on them, and using Google Translate to frantically search through the books for anything potentially incriminating. Mahmoud later learned that they were seeking keywords they could use to pin an "incitement of terrorism" charge on him, something they have so far been unable to do. Nevertheless, finding a handful of books on art and history, and a colouring book that displeased them,[1] the police arrested Mahmoud and Ahmad, pulling the men into the street as Mahmoud's daughter watched helplessly.

The pair are free now, thankfully—well, mostly free: they're on house arrest and have been barred from returning to the shop for two weeks. In their two days in custody however, Mahmoud tells of the same sorts of cruel mistreatment we've come to expect for Palestinians who are apprehended into Israeli prisons. With no trial and their only charge the nebulous "disturbing public order"—a charge +972 Magazine reports[2] is "common…in cases related to freedom of expression"—they were crammed in a tiny cell with almost a dozen other Palestinians. In short, they were treated like terrorists, assumed guilty and deserving of abuse.

I imagine I don't need to tell you that attacks on books and the people who sell them is a very bad sign. And while this example is particularly brazen, it fits within a larger repression of Palestinian expression and knowledge. Consider *Lyd,* the film I talked about last time, whose debut screening in Jaffa was banned back in October,[3] or the stifling of expressions of Palestinian joy[4] at the returning of their longsuffering prisoners, or, crucially, the systematic destruction of Gaza's universities and schools, which experts have called 'scholasticide.'[5]

If you want to control people, the surest and most insidious way is to control what information they have access to. When people have the information to contextualize their experiences, they can begin looking for solutions—often solutions that involve taking power back from their oppressors. But without such context, those in control of the narrative can sub whatever they like into that gaping desire for meaning. We see the same thing happening in the US as conservative elements pushing book bans try to remove any voice that speaks to the true diversity of the country or its history, and as the new presidency this past month began scrubbing government documents[6] of references to people of colour, women of authority, and queer people—particularly trans people.[7]

While the worst affected by this kind of censorship will always be the people whose lives and experiences are being censored, or, in the case of Mahmoud, physically threatened, it's also important to understand how this control over information harms the privileged party and the bystander. Truth matters, and when truth is denied, the vacuum it leaves is easily filled with apathy and fear.

I spoke this week, with roughly three dozen other people of conscience, against an ill-informed report that was being brought before my local school board. The spirit of the report was a good one: it aimed at addressing a rise

in antisemitism and fostering a better environment for Jewish students. However, in doing so, it completely sidestepped the rise in white supremacy and white nationalism which we know to be the primary causes of antisemitism, and instead conflated anti-Zionism—broadly speaking, criticism of Israel and a rejection of its founding ideology[8]—with antisemitism. Using this flawed methodology, the report lumped together instances of real antisemitism and instances of protest or critique of Israel, completely removed from context, such that it was impossible to tell how big a problem antisemitism actually is in our schools, and most crucially, what can be done about it. As I argued in my statement, if we cannot differentiate hateful behaviour from reasonable critique and justifiable resistance, then it will all seem like some nebulous cloud of hate, and our only response will be fear, defensiveness, and aggression. We can't fight ignorance by putting up more walls—on the contrary, it is out of ignorance that we put up walls in the first place.

For what it's worth, I hope Mahmoud and Ahmad can get back to their shop soon. There is too much ignorance in the world right now, and too many systems that make it much easier to choose ignorance. I hope Educational Bookshop can live up to its name, and help all residents of Jerusalem better understand how they got here, the responsibilities they have to each other, and that a better future for all of us lies on the other side of the wall. ❧

First published February 23, 2025

Zakariya Barbakh

"He didn't die from his disease; he ended up dying at the hands of the occupation. All he wanted was to have lungs to breathe, what did he do to deserve this? What did this child do?"

- Zakariya's mother

Back in November 2023, when that first "temporary truce" broke down, I remember an argument I had with a Zionist colleague of mine. I had posted, angrily, on my Instagram, about Israel's violation of the truce, only for them to respond quickly with the accusation that Hamas had actually been the ones to break the truce. I had my sources and I knew from my history with this person that they'd have theirs—whichever ones took the Israeli military's word at face value. So rather than be dragged into an endless spiral of 'my facts vs your facts', I asked them why they even still followed me in the first place. Why did they bother reading my Instagram stories? That worked in derailing the argument, and that was the last time I ever spoke to them.

I'm not a big proponent of arguing with embittered Zionists—or arguing on the internet at all for that matter—but over a year later, as the stability of a ceasefire is once again fragile, I do wonder if this redirection was a concession I shouldn't have made. I didn't want to waste my energy on this person I couldn't convince, but in suggesting that we were at a stalemate of narratives, I think I missed the point.

This week, I'd like to introduce you to a boy named Zakariya Barbakh. Zakariya was thirteen years old when the ceasefire agreement went into effect last month, and he was so excited to begin living his life again. He'd always had a hard life, even aside from the constant humiliation of the occupation, as he was born with only one lung. Now that Israeli bombs had stopped falling on Gaza, he was

filled with hope that he might finally have the operation that would let him enter his adulthood in good health. But he didn't get his lung, and he didn't get to grow up, because on the second day of the ceasefire, while he was collecting wood for his mother, an Israeli sniper murdered him.

For weeks, our mainstream media has been falling all over itself to report Israel's accusations that Hamas is sabotaging the ceasefire. You may have heard, for example, that Hamas had delayed the captive exchange two weeks ago, or that Hamas returned a body that wasn't actually one of the captives. You may have even heard about a trio of buses that were exploded in Tel Aviv—no casualties, and not directly tied to anyone, but certainly enough excuse for Netanyahu to dramatically escalate the ethnic cleansing of the northern West Bank, resulting in now 40 000 displaced Palestinians. But I bet you didn't hear about Zakariya.

I hope this ceasefire holds, but if it does it will be because Palestinians bore hundreds of violations and soldiered on for the sake of peace.

I bet you didn't hear about Zakariya *or the other 100+ Gazans who Israel has killed since the ceasefire began - **35 days** ago.* I bet you didn't hear about the almost 1000 others who've been injured in that same 35 days, or the bombings and home demolitions that continue, or the drones and fighter jets that continue to buzz and roar through the sky

Likewise, I bet you didn't hear about *why* Hamas threatened to delay the captive exchange: because Israel has continued to block the aid that it is legally obligated to (and which it agreed to) under the ceasefire agreement. Israel is required to let in 600 aid trucks every day, but for each of the the first 15 days of the ceasefire, they let in barely three quarters of that number—the most restricted were trucks carrying the fuel necessary for sustaining Gaza's medical system. As of February 17th, they have also only let in 10% of the 200 000 tents required to house the population of Gaza's demolished cities, only **six** of the required **five hundred** bulldozers needed to begin rebuilding, and **ZERO** of the agreed-upon **SIXTY THOUSAND** mobile homes—that should have been roughly 1 mobile home rolling across the Rafah border **EVERY MINUTE** since the ceasefire. And before you ask, "well, the first phase of the ceasefire isn't finished yet" (put a pin in that) "maybe it's all just on its way?" No, it's actually sitting at the Rafah border, and has been for weeks.[1]

Israel has also blocked much of the medicine and medical equipment required to get Gaza's hospitals up and running again. At the same time, it has systematically denied or delayed planned medical evacuations for people—often children—who require immediate medical care in properly functioning hospitals outside of Gaza. A 2-year-old girl named Habiba Al-Askari is one example of this cruelty: she suffers from protein C deficiency, resulting in severe blood clots, restricted circulation, and gangrene. She was set to be evacuated to Jordan for treatment, but Israel delayed her evacuation, and by the time she arrived, she was lucky to even be alive. She wasn't lucky enough, however, to keep her arms and right leg. As of last week, roughly 90% of the 1000 patients, so approximately 900 patients, who had been promised evacuation were still trapped in Gaza.

And finally, returning to that pin from earlier, the second phase of the ceasefire is now two weeks delayed, with all indications showing Israel to be uninterested in negotiating as they'd agreed, while Hamas remains committed to ensuring the ceasefire is permanent.[2] Meanwhile, Israeli politicians froth at the mouth for a return to the assault and billboards in Tel Aviv laud Donald Trump's ethnic cleansing plan for the Gaza Strip.[3] Our neighbours in Gaza are quick to point out the probable cause of all these delays and violations: Israel and the US just want the genocide to continue. They do not want any Palestinians in Gaza. They want their beachfront property. And if all of the above isn't enough, just two days ago, Israel dropped leaflets on Gaza[4] telling them that the world has abandoned them, peace is a sham, and that they need to get out or die. Just this morning, Netanyahu said he was gearing up for war,[5] accompanied by the refusal to release 620 Palestinian captives due their freedom today.

Maybe, back in November when I had that argument, I should have pushed the issue. Maybe I shouldn't have been so quick to concede to their hypothetical rebuttal. That kind of concession *is* the current state of our news media, which accepts and repeats Israel's sensational claims while downplaying or disregarding the bigger picture. It's a certain framing that sees the Israeli narrative as the default, and we just can't let that fly. Not in private conversations or in the public arena.

I hope this ceasefire holds, but if it does it will be because Palestinians bore hundreds of violations and soldiered on for the sake of peace. If it doesn't, don't let anyone tell you it wasn't Israel's fault. Maybe if you find yourself in a conversation like I had, you can tell them about Zakariya. ❧

First published March 2, 2025

Essam Awad

"The memories are endless. There's been so much life here. Now, there are only bullet holes."

- Essam Awad, speaking to Al Jazeera

This week, I tried to imagine tanks rolling through the streets of Toronto.

Can you picture it? Sitting on your couch, or making breakfast in your kitchen, only to feel the ground shake and watch the glass rattle and split in the windows. What would you do when boots thud against your door and assault rifles lurch in your direction? Where would you go when they bark at you to get out?

I expect it's not a scenario most of us can even consider happening here, but for our neighbours in Palestine's West Bank, that's their reality right now. As Israel continues its murderous "Operation Iron Wall"—which I first wrote about back in January when we met 16-year-old Motaz Abu Tabeekh—more and more of our neighbours are being forced out of their homes. At least 40 000 people have been displaced from the northern West Bank—cities like Jenin, Tulkarem, and Nablus—as Israeli tanks roll through residential streets.

"Every Friday, my children used to gather here. Their mother would cook. Dalal would help in the kitchen. Sometimes, Samah would visit from Jenin. But this Friday, we won't gather. The army made sure of that."

One such person is today's neighbour, Essam Awad. Essam is a 55-year-old father and husband from Far'a, a refugee camp near Nablus. Earlier in February, Israel began its siege on Far'a, just as it has continued to do across the West Bank. Israeli forces blockaded the community, barring all entrances, stemming the flow of supplies, and severing power and water. Over the next 8 days, they systematically displaced around a third of the population at gunpoint, carrying out the same flavour of "evacuations" that they practiced in northern Gaza and in the fateful case of Muhammad Bhar.[1] Bulldozers plowed through the camp's tight alleys, tearing buildings to shreds and leaving rubble where homes once stood. Helpless, Essam and his wife waited until it was their turn to hear the banging on the door.

They waited in the house that he himself had built for his family. In an interview with Al Jazeera, he talked about how the house grew as his family did: "I built it in stages as my family grew. With six children, the ground floor wasn't big enough. Eventually, that floor became our diwan, where we gathered every night. The winters used to feel warm here – with our company, with our laughter,"

The day the Israeli soldiers came for him, they told him he'd have to leave, but not without answering some questions about his family first. See, while Essam's children had long since moved out of the family home, his middle son Muhammed returned from his studies in Türkiye last April to visit his family. What should have been a warm reunion turned cold when an Israeli soldier shot Muhammed as he was walking down the street; no explanation was ever given, but it's possible that Muhammed was the victim of the Israeli military's deployment alongside the spate of armed Israeli settler violence across the West Bank in April 2024.[2] Regardless, when the Israeli soldiers invaded Essam's home, they forced him back into that painful memory, interrogating him for three hours about the details of Muhammad's death. Only after this degradation did they finally demand that he leave. When he refused, they beat him with their rifles and threw him into the street.

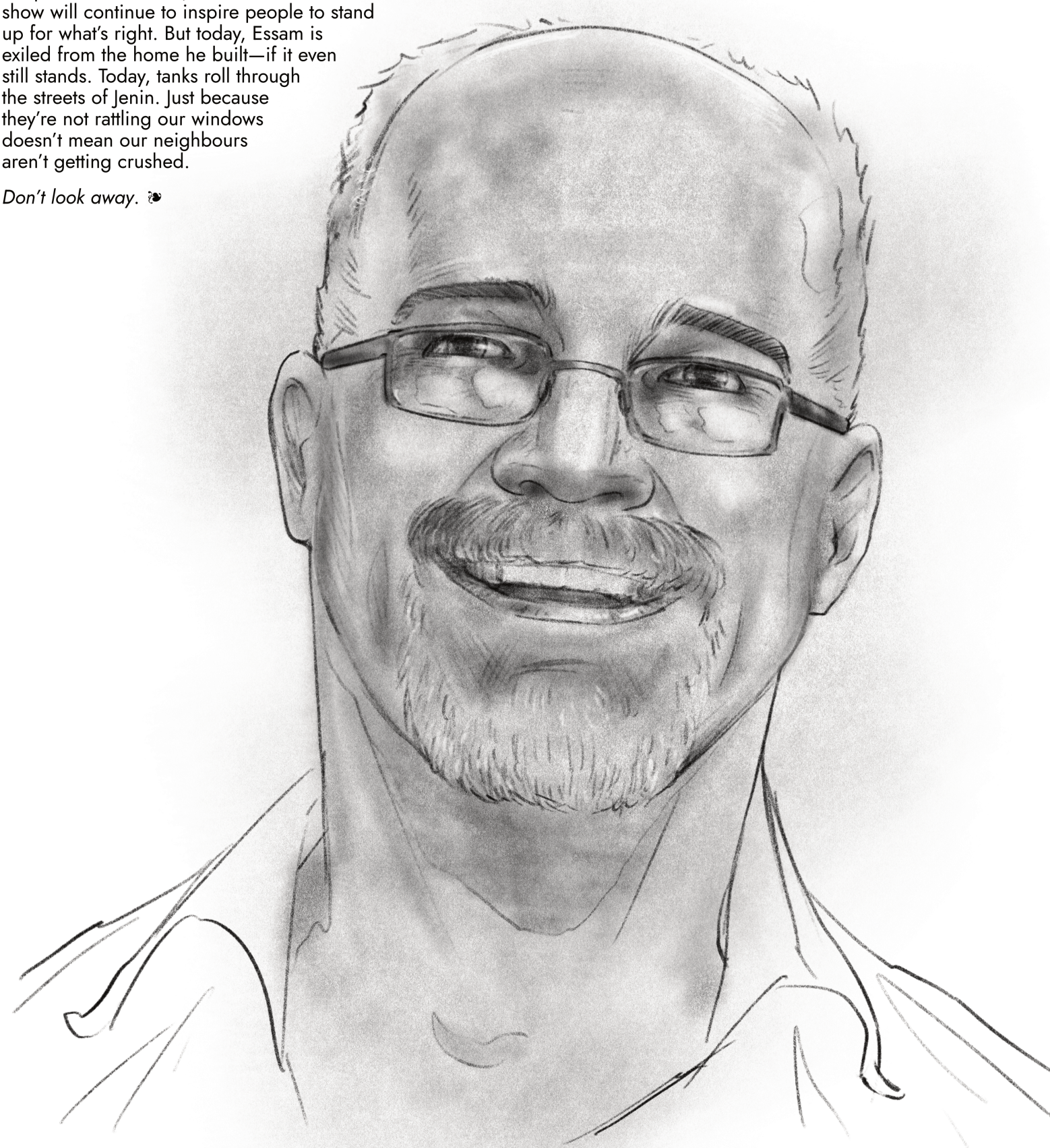
At the time when Essam spoke to Al Jazeera, his home and its memories were still standing, occupied by soldiers, a tantalizing few blocks from his brother's house where he'd taken refuge. And today, if his predictions are correct, Essam's house has likely been ravaged or demolished following the soldiers' redeployment elsewhere. In other parts of the West Bank however, Israel has set up military command posts—sometimes in families' living rooms—and has declared that displaced residents won't be allowed to return for up to a year. For so many of these families, residents of the West Bank's many refugee camps, this is their second displacement—their second Nakba. They know that, as awful as it sounds to be kept from their homes for a year while jackboots stomp through their living rooms, if something isn't done to stop Israel's ambitions soon, this will just be another example of long-term ethnic cleansing.

"Every Friday, my children used to gather here. Their mother would cook. Dalal would help in the kitchen. Sometimes, Samah would visit from Jenin. But this Friday, we won't gather. The army made sure of that."

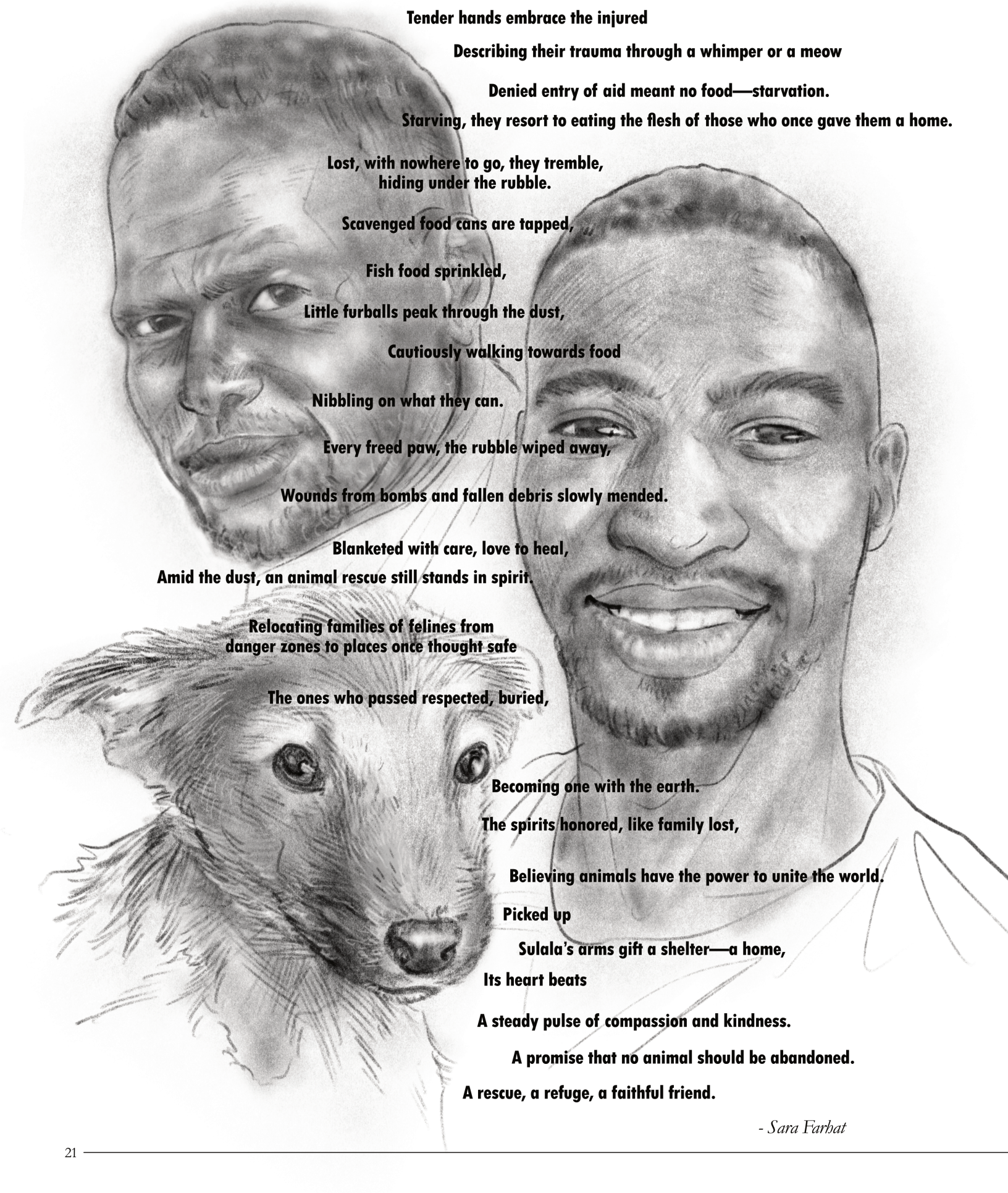
Some analysts, like Qassam Muaddi at Mondoweiss,[3] have speculated that Israel's deployment of extreme violence in this unprecedented scale to the West Bank—alongside its increased attacks in Syria and of course its continued flagrant violations of the Gaza ceasefire—may represent a performance of force in the face of crisis. Israel's fifteen month genocide has amounted to its longest sustained period of warfare in history, its economy is in shambles (particularly the construction sector, which was built on cheap Palestinian labour), and the complexities of the Trump administration mean a new diplomatic dynamic with the country that has funded the genocide (to the tune of almost 18 billion dollars). Most crucially, eyes around the world—from the International Court of Justice to everyday people seeing war crimes on Instagram—are fixed on Israel's occupation of Palestine, and they can't hide any more.

I hope this is the case, and that the cracks which show will continue to inspire people to stand up for what's right. But today, Essam is exiled from the home he built—if it even still stands. Today, tanks roll through the streets of Jenin. Just because they're not rattling our windows doesn't mean our neighbours aren't getting crushed.

Don't look away. ❧



Sulala Animal Rescue



Tender hands embrace the injured

Describing their trauma through a whimper or a meow

Denied entry of aid meant no food—starvation.

Starving, they resort to eating the flesh of those who once gave them a home.

Lost, with nowhere to go, they tremble,
hiding under the rubble.

Scavenged food cans are tapped,

Fish food sprinkled,

Little furballs peak through the dust,

Cautiously walking towards food

Nibbling on what they can.

Every freed paw, the rubble wiped away,

Wounds from bombs and fallen debris slowly mended.

Blanketed with care, love to heal,
Amid the dust, an animal rescue still stands in spirit.

Relocating families of felines from
danger zones to places once thought safe

The ones who passed respected, buried,

Becoming one with the earth.

The spirits honored, like family lost,

Believing animals have the power to unite the world.

Picked up

Sulala's arms gift a shelter—a home,

Its heart beats

A steady pulse of compassion and kindness.

A promise that no animal should be abandoned.

A rescue, a refuge, a faithful friend.

- Sara Farhat

Gaza's only animal rescue

"I cannot refuse a dog in need and leave him on the street. These are poor souls who have a very difficult life in Gaza."
- Saeed Al-Err, Founder of Sulala Animal Rescue

Guest-written by poet Sara Farhat. Read more of Sara's work in Threads of Palestine *by House of Amal press.*

Through the human suffering, destruction, and rubble, you can still find love and compassion in the form of those who protect and tend to animals. Today, I introduce you to Sulala Animal Rescue, also known as Sulala Society. It is the first and only animal rescue organization in the Gaza Strip. Founded in 2006 by Saeed Al-Err, Sulala operates as an animal shelter and veterinary clinic for stray animals in Gaza, including cats, dogs, horses, and donkeys. The rescue's mission is to provide shelter to strays, conduct rescue operations, offer medical treatment and rehabilitation for abandoned and injured animals, and promote educational outreach. Saeed also helps citizens who own pets but cannot afford food or medical care for them.

The shelter spans the size of a football field, with an open area where the dogs can run and roam freely, as well as a shelter for them to sleep. It typically houses around 400 dogs. In Saeed's house, he has 40 cats, with two additional apartments that shelter 40 more.

Sulala was born out of Saeed's love for animals and his deep concern for the welfare of stray animals in Gaza. In the early 2000s, Saeed began feeding and caring for homeless animals, which eventually led to the creation of Sulala Society. Over the years, the shelter has grown to accommodate hundreds of animals, providing them with food, shelter, medical care, and rehabilitation. In the beginning, Saeed managed the shelter alone, but as the years passed, it expanded, and now he is supported by a team of volunteers.

Saeed has eight children, all of whom actively help him with Sulala's mission. His son Sa'ed is particularly visible on Instagram, frequently participating in rescue missions. During times of the genocide and evacuation orders from the occupation, Sa'ed managed to relocate all the cats to a safer apartment in southern Gaza. In addition to his rescue efforts, Sa'ed contributes to the shelter's daily management. He collaborates closely with his father and his brother Mubarak, helping to supervise the clinic and oversee rescue operations, ensuring the animals receive timely medical care.

Operating in Gaza comes with significant challenges, including food and medical supply shortages, exacerbated by past aggressions, closed borders, and the current genocide. During the ongoing genocide, Saeed was forced to give the cats and dogs fish food and cans of meat or tuna, as animal food supplies were severely limited due to the blockade and the denial of aid trucks into Gaza. The entire population, including humans and their pets, is collectively punished, and it's heartbreaking to witness dogs starving and cats with dry, trembling tongues in need of water. Despite hardships, the shelter continues its mission, relying on donations and the unwavering support of volunteers to care for the animals.

"I can't leave any animal behind. If they are in my house or with me, they sleep next to me." — Saeed Al-Err

Saeed's commitment to animal welfare was recognized in 2024 when he was honoured with the Golden Star Award by Worldwide Vets, acknowledging his exceptional dedication. Saeed secured the award with an impressive 8,580 votes, reflecting the widespread support for his work. This accolade is well-deserved, considering the obstacles he faces every day while continuing to care for the animals in Gaza amidst the ongoing genocide. In his thank-you message, Saeed expressed his deep gratitude to all who voted for him and acknowledged their role in this achievement.

In his interview, Saeed shared his hope that his work at Sulala will inspire others to care for stray animals. He emphasized that securing funding is one of the most challenging aspects, as he often covers the cost of the animals' care from his own paycheck. However, he feels blessed to have overcome many obstacles since the world learned about Sulala and the important work they do in Gaza. His advice to others who want to follow in his footsteps is to begin by working from the heart, rather than focusing on donations from the start. By showing that you care for the animals and are genuinely committed, people will recognize your efforts and support will follow.

Saeed's dream is to one day have a conference where all animal rescuers from around the world can meet and share their experiences. He views his Golden Star Award as a blessing, but says that the most important aspect is connecting with other animal rescuers worldwide and learning from their work.

I hope Saeed's dream comes true and that Sulala Animal Rescue continues to flourish and inspire others around the world to care for animals. Their work is a beacon of light and compassion for animals in Gaza.

For more information or to support Sulala Animal Rescue, you can visit their official website at Sulala.ps or follow them on Instagram @SulalaAnimalRescue. ❧

Pray with your hands

You can support Sulala Animal Rescue's work right now by choosing a donation option at Linktr.ee/SulalaAnimalRescue1

ISRAEL IS KILLING PEACE

FIRST PUBLISHED
MARCH 9, 2025

"This is the way they are. They commit the crime, deny it, and when the victim confronts them they sidestep the question by talking of peace."

- Mahmoud Darwish, Journal of Ordinary Grief

ISRAEL IS BREAKING THE CEASEFIRE

We know, of course, that Israel *has* been breaking the ceasefire since it started—remember our neighbour Zakariya Barbakh. But this week, Israel adopted another approach. Simply speaking, it has begun starving Palestinians as collective punishment.

This isn't a new tactic; in fact, back when Israel cut off food, water, and electricity in October 2023, that was when I first realized this was a genocide. This time though, they're blocking food, water, and electricity as leverage to renege on their agreements in the ceasefire deal.

I've seen multiple headlines that claim Israel is using this leverage to make Hamas "extend the ceasefire"—at this point, I consider such wording to be journalistic malpractice. Israel is not trying to "extend the ceasefire," it's trying to stretch the first phase of a three-phase ceasefire into oblivion so it will not have to release its military hold on Gaza or allow Gazans to rebuild. Israel is breaking their agreement. It's really that simple.

Likewise, I've seen many outlets claim Israel is "blocking aid"—this isn't just "aid," just "assistance," this is *life* that is being withheld. This is starvation as a weapon. This is collective punishment. This is a war crime. This is genocide continued.

Israel is breaking the ceasefire. It is crushing it in each body starved, bombed, or left to freeze.[1] It's crushing the life out of the hospitals and sanitation stations that are just beginning to come back online. It's crushing the possibility of a future in Gaza as it seeks everything from Gazans but gives nothing in return.

BUT I DIDN'T TITLE THIS POST "ISRAEL IS BREAKING THE CEASEFIRE." I CALLED IT "ISRAEL IS KILLING PEACE"

The Israeli government, as well as many other Zionist voices in our various governments and media, would have you believe that this is all for peace. The faster we can—depending on who you ask—get the Israeli captives back, remove Hamas from power, or turn Gaza into the "Rivera of the Middle East," the faster the conflict will be over. The faster peace will come. But this is ludicrous.

Peace—even a so-called 'peace' for the privileged few—does not come from a tighter fist. The more you crush someone down, the more they will want to rise up. And the more you destabilize their way of life—the more you cut off other avenues for dissent and drive people to desperation—the more this rise will be a violent one.

Gaza has a chance, right now, to survive this genocide and rebuild. I'd be lying if I said it was a *good* chance—politically, it's once again back in the hands and good graces of the neighbouring Arab states, resisting the US's ethnic cleansing plan.[2] It's only through rebuilding and solidarity that Palestinians will be able to heal their communities, heal their lands, and find their liberation without more bloodshed.

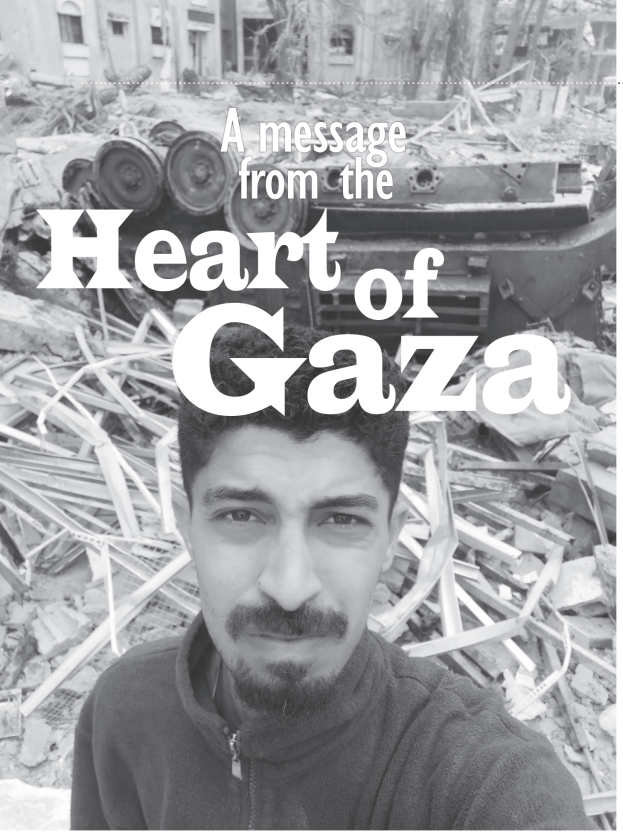
IT IS ONLY IN THE SOIL OF A FREE SOCIETY THAT PEACE CAN GROW

So, when Israel tries to force out of the process *they agreed to*, steal back what little power Gazans have at this table, and keep the entire populace wrapped in barbed wire, snipers trained from afar, *that is not a recipe for peace*. If anything, it's an encouragement to flip the table.

I haven't written much about peace in this project, not because I don't believe in peace, but because I don't believe in the kind of peace people like Trump and Netanyahu do. Theirs is a peace of *absence*. Of *silence*. Peace and quiet—gone are the cries for justice and tears of the oppressed. I believe in a peace that means restoration—a peace you earn by listening to the cries for justice and helping the oppressed out of their sorrows. A peace which surpasses all understanding. And this peace *cannot* come while *any* are still in bondage.

Real peace grows out of justice. Without justice, there will never be peace. So let justice flow down like a river. And to quote a favourite protest chant of mine, "if you really want some peace, hands off the Middle East."

Let's do one more, just for good measure. "No justice? No peace. Know justice? Know peace."



A message from the Heart of Gaza

On Monday, March 17, 2025, Israel shattered the ceasefire with the murder of more than 600 Palestinians in Gaza. In the aftermath, I found myself at a loss for words. Once again I was confronted by the limitations of this project, of how few of these beautiful lives I am able to share.

That week, rather than bringing you my own limited words, I shared the words of one of our neighbours. You may remember Rabie Hussein from when my colleague Candice introduced him an another neighbour, Abdalrahman, back in November 2024 (collected in Imago Palestina Magazine Vol. 2*). Since then, I've been following him on Instagram (@_rabiehussein), where he writes about his experiences in Gaza. He has graciously allowed me to share his reflection on the brutal attacks.*

In the name of God, the best of names; in the name of God, with whose name no harm can befall; in the name of God, for my oppressed people, whose security has been violated and whose lives have been violated in their holy land. You have heard, seen, and are observing the renewed exhaustion of artillery and airstrikes. We woke up in the dead of night to intense airstrikes that covered the entire Gaza Strip, claiming hundreds of lives. This was followed by the occupation army's boastful announcement of continuing its attacks, killing more and more, with overt American approval.

The matter in brief: an enemy that has not yet had enough of our blood, nor has it recovered from our suffering, and a country far to the west, crouching across the ocean, supplying it with everything it needs. Ammunition, plans, and information. Approval of the operations of genocide and ethnic cleansing, following the example of their forefathers who built their fragile civilization with this audacious approach. The two met in one room, their plot conspired, and they reached a decisive, firm decision. They looked at Gaza, pointed at it from afar with their sinful hands, and then said in a vile voice, "If it must be, then mercy would be not to show them mercy." These sinful people are like serial killers, sick in soul, full of flaws, in every time and place. They feed on blood and terrorism. This is how they make their living.

As for us, we supplicate to God and turn to Him with certainty: These are only the destinies ordained for us, and there is no turning back. So how can we not accept them and do what the test demands? What God wills, not what we will, and what God has decreed, He does.

In the past, a Bedouin bought a boy and asked the seller, "Is there anything wrong with him?" He replied, "No, except that he wets the bed." The Bedouin replied, "That's not a flaw. If he finds a bed, let him wet it." This is our situation in oppressed Gaza. A slaughtered sheep is not pained by skinning.

They seek to kill more of us and expel us from the Holy Land. They hope we will leave and be exiled to the ends of the earth. Only a weak-minded fool would accept this. We know that they are heading towards this grave sin: displacing us from our land, we who have been content with this life of tranquility, far from the hustle and bustle of everyday life, in a tent on the ruins of our destroyed homes, on our land. They are preparing for more killing and corruption on earth. I ask God Almighty, and I seek good tidings in these blessed days of Ramadan, to frustrate these people's omens and turn their plots back on them. They chose the wrong time to attack the sanctity of our people, who are busy worshipping and providing for themselves during these days.

You, our friends, have always been there, and the bet is on you. You do not give your covenant to a specific man you know by name and person, but rather give it to the meaning upon which your hearts are united: justice without injustice, truth unmixed with falsehood, and honesty untainted by lies, to the pure and chaste past, to the Holy Land, which was and continues to be a meeting place for humanity, civilization, and peace. You knew that there would be no peace while these

scoundrels, feeding on blood, were among us. You mixed our poverty with your riches, and no generous person among you withheld his favor from those in need among us. Instead, you helped us with the costs of our chivalry and increased our need. We are unable to

thank you enough for all that you have done and are doing for us. The old saying goes: The inability to thank is the greatest thanks. We are unable to thank you, and we are counting on you in the coming days. We do not know what we will face after this day. If God decides to separate us, do not forget us in your prayers, and continue to ask about our families. What remains is your souls and your dignity. If you control them, you will be the masters of the matter, otherwise it is a jungle for wild beasts.

Don't miss out on anything that is happening in our land and around us in Palestine. Don't allow the weak-hearted, the hesitant, and those harboring rumors to infect you with the contagion of disappointment, thus deterring you from your important and sacred role in our just cause and in lifting the oppression of our people. You entered this matter from the beginning of your own will, and we saw you from the heart of Gaza like stars in our sky. We cried with longing to meet you, and your planting bore fruit, and had a sweet-smelling breeze, and you supported us and were extremely kind. Today we listen to calls for huge mobilizations there in front of the White House, stained with the blood of innocents; those are real, spontaneous, and innocent cries as a result of what is happening here in

Palestine, Gaza, Yemen and the countries that suffer from that wrong management that Satan has taken control of. It is the strong and successful beginning, God willing, to lift the injustice and strike at the hand of the oppressor, and I call on everyone to go out and join the caravans of the discontented, to restore the prestige and will of free peoples. And here is the rule: "Show poverty and your hater will covet you, or show strength and pride from the beginning and his goal later will be to feel safe with you." Today is your day, so don't miss it. He who has experienced a lofty place among the stars will no longer be able to find a low foothold in the mud. And you are stars.

As for us, we promise you more patience and steadfastness, God willing, and with God's help. We seek refuge in Him from the evil of every stubborn tyrant. We ask Him not to afflict us with a calamity beyond our patience, and to spare us the burdens of this world and all the horrors of war until He brings us out of it safe and sound.

Long ago, a man wanted to travel, so he said to his wife: "Count the years of my absence and be patient... and leave the months, for they are short." She replied: "Remember our longing for you and our yearning... and have mercy on your daughters, for they are young." So he stayed and abandoned the journey. This is us in Gaza: living in hardship, abandoning the comforts of life, because we are the rightful owners, and we fear that our passions will sway us or that life will punish us if we give up even an inch of Palestine's soil, until God decrees a matter that is destined to be done. Or as the saying goes: Lions die of hunger in the jungle, and dogs eat lamb.

I don't know what the situation will be like in a few hours or days, and this may be my last contact with you. So, remember our absence, forgive us for our bad qualities, and include us in your prayers so that God's kindness may encompass us in every calamity. There is no path beyond God, for man has no other way. He is our Master.

First published April 4, 2025

Saleh, Rifaat, Ashraf, Raed, Mohammad, Mohammad,

How do you excuse a murder?

Well, why not start with that word, 'murder'? That's a particularly strong word. It turns people off. Maybe instead, you could call it the 'elimination of a military target.'

Though, that can be a bit tricky when so many of your 'military targets' are civilians, and it's particularly bothersome when those civilians wear medical gear, high-vis vests, and PPE—even more so when they spend most of their time working in hospitals or driving around in clearly-marked ambulances.

Perhaps in that case you can spread constant unverifiable statements about 'terrorists hiding in hospitals' or 'terrorists pretending to be doctors.' 'Terrorist' is also a strong word, and it's very sticky. If you repeat these claims enough (and if the media helps out by repeating them, once again without verification), people might start to doubt every time you murder a doctor.

But say you decide to murder a lot of doctors (and nurses, and paramedics, and first responders—and teachers and kids and...well, the list goes on, but let's focus on the doctors for now). After a while, people might start to think, "that's a lot of doctors they're killing. I know they said they're all terrorists, but that doesn't feel right." Fortunately, doctors tend to hang out together in hospitals, and their oaths of medicine usually require them to treat everyone. Sooner or later, they're going to treat someone who might actually fit the average person's definition of a 'military target,' and when you tell the average person that it's actually fine to blow up a hospital to 'eliminate' one target, the average person is not going to know that you're lying. They're not going to know that attacking hospitals is still a war crime, no matter who is being treated within. So you might convince them that all those doctors and nurses and paramedics (and so on) were just unfortunate collateral damage, rather than murder victims.

But say—and I'm sure this would *never* happen—that you decided to murder people for over 17 months straight. Say you'd rolled out all the above excuses and let the world react in horror to the *first* hospital bombing (maybe even the second!). Say you eventually even agreed to a ceasefire, only to go ahead and unilaterally torpedo it. Say you *still* wanted to murder some people.

Honestly, by that point, your problem has already pretty much solved itself. You just keep murdering people, so quickly, so consistently, that the backlog of massacres and the mountain of bodies becomes too much for people to remember their names, their faces, or even where and when you murdered them. You turn the people into headlines, then into statistics, then into meat. Then you cover them with sand and move on to the next murder.

To the right you'll see eight faces. Those eight faces belong to (clockwise from top, ending in centre) Saleh Moamer, Rifaat Radwan, Ashraf Abu Labda, Raed Al-Sharif, Mohammad Bahloul, Mohammad Al-Hila, Ezz AlDin Shatt, and Mustafa Khafaja. Each of these 8 men was an EMT with the Palestine Red Crescent Society, and they were murdered sometime last week by Israeli forces as they rushed to help their neighbours in Rafah's Tal al-Sultan neighbourhood, which Israel has been violently raiding. Along with them, Israel also murdered five members of the Gazan Civil Defense (first responders) and one person who cannot be identified. Their bodies were found on March 30, riddled with bullet holes, buried in a mass grave.

These are men who risked their lives day after day through months of genocide to care for their neighbours. These are the men who ran *towards* the sounds of the bombs. They deserve more than the sheer and utter indignity that they had in their last moments. They deserve to be more than a headline, or a statistic, or meat tossed aside and buried. They also deserve more of a tribute than a furious and irony-laden diatribe, even if it's all I have to offer right now.

Each and every one of these precious human beings deserve for us to hear their names. They deserve to have their stories told, to not be remembered as numbers. They deserve more than I have to give them.

They deserve to still be here.

In the past two weeks, Israel also bombed the Nasser Hospital, the Dar al-Aqam school, a Saudi medical warehouse in Rafah, a UNRWA clinic in Jabalia, and hundreds of other locations across Gaza. Each day brings a new death toll ranging from dozens to well over a hundred—and those are only the people we know about. On March 31, UNICEF reported that at least 100 children have been killed or injured *every day* since Israel shattered the ceasefire on March 18. Each and every one of these precious human beings deserve for us to hear their names. They deserve to have their stories told, to not be remembered as numbers. They deserve more than I have to give them.

They deserve to still be here.

Israel knows that, if they follow that game plan I facetiously laid out at the beginning, the work of dehumanization will continue on for them. We will be overwhelmed by the scale of death—the scale of those murders—and many of us will seize any excuse that relieves some of that emotion. Average people will buy the easy lies so that they don't have to deal with how awful the reality is.

Ezz, and Mustafa

EMTs. Martyered in March, 2025

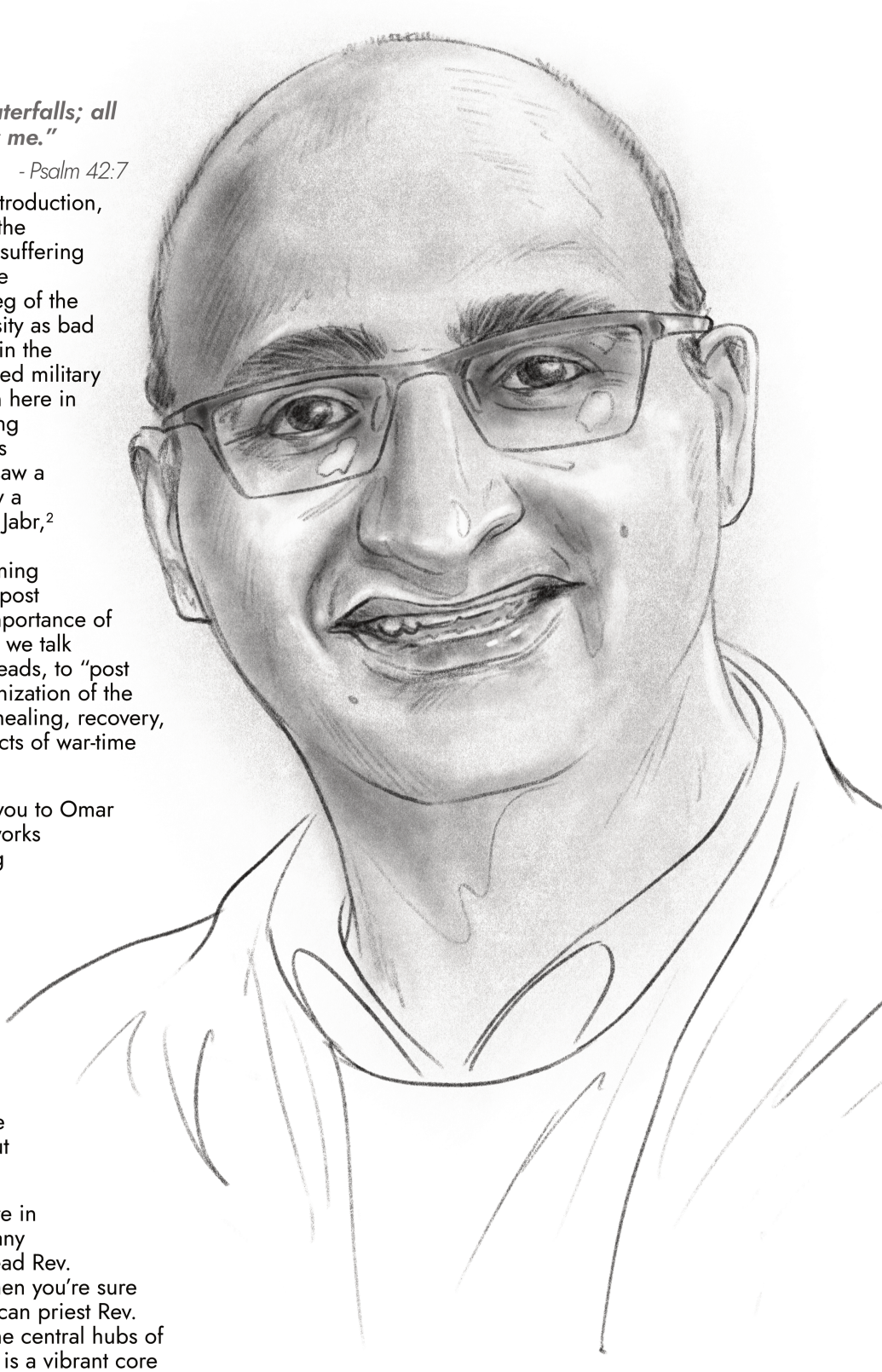
We can't give these neighbours what they deserve: the safe and dignified lives that we all should be entitled to. But what we can give them—or at least try to—is some justice. What they deserve—what we have to offer—is all of our feet hitting pavement, all of our voices raised, and all of our hands sharing in the labour needed to stop this violence.

I urge you not to get lost in the scale of the calamity, or down its rhetorical off-ramps. I urge you to read our neighbours' names and look at their faces. Find one thing you can do to honour their humanity, and when you've done that one thing, do the next thing. ❧

Omar Haramy

"Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls; all your waves and breakers have swept over me."

- Psalm 42:7



As I was planning out this week's introduction, I found myself once again facing the enormity of evil, oppression, and suffering that our Palestinian neighbours are experiencing. In Gaza, this new leg of the genocide blazes on with an intensity as bad as it's ever been; our neighbours in the West Bank are still suffering the most heightened military violence and restrictions in decades; and even here in North America, Palestinians and allies are being kidnapped and disappeared as part of the US's escalating authoritarian repression. I recently saw a message from Decolonizing Health[1] shared by a neighbour we met back in January, Dr. Samah Jabr,[2] which highlighted the importance of *sumud* (steadfastness) in rising to meet this overwhelming barrage of pain. I'd recommend you read the post yourself,[3] but one thing I took away was the importance of highlighting *sumud*, in its various forms, when we talk about Palestine. It's too easy, as the message reads, to "post only death… [and thereby] mirror the dehumanization of the oppressor". We need to showcase "stories of healing, recovery, and rebuilding, not as feel-good fluff, but as acts of war-time resistance."

So, today, in that spirit, I wanted to introduce you to Omar Haramy and the steadfast community that he works with which has been a consistent and inspiring image of *sumud*.

Omar Haramy is a Palestinian Christian from Jerusalem and he currently serves as the director of the Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center (Sabeel means both 'the way' and 'spring (of water)' in Arabic). While I'd love to tell you more about who Omar is as an individual, he seems like a fairly private person, and I'm happy to respect that privacy. We'll hear a little of what he has to say about *sumud* later on, but for now I want to focus on Sabeel.

I haven't explicitly mentioned the Sabeel Centre in Imago Palestina before, but if you have done any reading into Palestinian Christians (or if you read Rev. Munther Isaac's book like I recommended[4]), then you're sure to have heard of it. Founded in 1989 by Anglican priest Rev. Naim Ateek, it has grown to become one of the central hubs of Christian thought and advocacy in Palestine. It is a vibrant core for theological thought and prayer—with a particular focus on liberation theology[5] (in the broadest sense, the theology of how God's call for justice includes Spirit liberation from physical repressions as much as spiritual ones)—and it's widely connected to church communities of believers around the world. You may even be familiar with its 'chapters' around the world—usually called "Friends of Sabeel," like our country's Canadian Friends of Sabeel.

While Omar is Sabeel's current director, he is in no way the sole driver of this community or its work. In fact, I chose to highlight him because, while he just received Depaul University's Berrigan-McAlister award for Christian nonviolent resistance,[6] it's clear that he is accepting this award as a representative of the larger Sabeel body. In my opinion, this communal aspect of Sabeel—which stretches even beyond the borders of Palestine—is one of its greatest strengths.

It's this strength that brings me back to *sumud*. My favourite Sabeel resource right now is called the Wave of Prayer. Every week, the folks at Sabeel publish a selection of short updates

about our neighbours in Palestine and a short prayer for each update. I first learned about the wave of prayer—and prayed along with it—at the Christians for a Free Palestine weekly Vesper service, and I can't overstate how powerful it was to pray through it together. Not only does it elegantly present the current situation in Palestine in a much more humanizing way than so many headlines do, but it also serves as a beautiful way of connecting with those who share our struggle all around the world. Standing up for our Palestinian neighbours can often be a very isolating experience; the blankets of imperialism, Zionism, and anti-Palestinian racism are well designed to insulate us and make our voices sound small. But when I pray along with the wave of prayer, and I know that friends of Sabeel all around the world are praying with me the same words, I feel less like a voice crying in the wilderness, and more like one part of an expansive choir.

We can't meet evil which overwhelms us by lying down and letting it—or by burying our heads in the sand. We can meet it—and overcome it—by joining together in our own wave of sumud.

Sumud is most often represented by an olive tree, its deep roots anchoring it to the land from which it draws its sustenance and finds its identity. I, a white Canadian, and certainly in no position to bump the Olive tree off its pedestal, but reflecting on Sabeel's Wave of Prayer, I can't help but think that a wave is also a good way to visualize this steadfastness.

I think of the millions of our neighbours in Gaza who have known the waves to be a constant companion—I think of the fishers who find their livelihood and nourishment in the waves, or the children like our neighbour Ahmed who long to feel the waves' spray and have the sound of warplanes drowned out by their roaring.[7] I think of the tens of thousands displaced across Gaza by Israel's bombing who planted their tents on the soft sand next to those waves.

I think also of the kufiyeh[8] (the traditional black and white shawl that you'll see many Palestinians and allies wearing) which references the waves both in the fishnet pattern—nodding to those fishers from before—and the swooping symbols which serve double duty as either waves or olive leaves—either way representing "strength and resilience."[9] I think of the way that I and so many others wrap our kufiyehs around ourselves as an act of closeness with our neighbours who are physically so far away. I think of the conversations it invites— "why do you always wear that shawl?" "What does it mean?"—ensuring my neighbours' stories are always on my lips.

But mostly I think of how these waves, composed of countless droplets that would be so weak on their own, can raise the largest ships and crash over the highest walls when united. I think of how the sea does not dump all its deluge at once, but in a steady rhythm, some parts crashing onto shore while others wait, rest, and grow for their turn. I think of how, while waves can be rough or calm depending on circumstance, they are ultimately guided by the moon's pull—a unifying force not diminished by its distance.

Christians, at our best, understand the value of congregation. We know that we are all parts of one body, that we all have different gifts and strengths and weaknesses, that we can do far more than we can imagine on our own when we work together, and that there can be unity between people removed by time and space (and even death). And while I hope we are able to take the waves' example and be unified by a central ideological vision—a world in which all can live in dignity—we also have the conviction of our faith. To quote Omar in his own reflection on *sumud* from December 2024,[10] "for us, *sumud* is not just resistance; it is the courage to live in the light of Christ's example even when the weight of oppression feels unbearable... In our steadfastness we answer the call of Christ—to live in faith, to resist injustice and to stand firm in hope and love, carrying forth the good news even in challenging times."

We are living in challenging times. Frankly, challenging is too kind a word for the times in which we're living. While, inspired by the Wave of Prayer, I've held 'waves' up as an example today, the pain we're witnessing and experiencing often feels much like a wave as well. Unrelenting. Overwhelming. Drowning. We do not feel buoyed by these waves and breakers as they sweep over us, but crushed with grief and sodden with despair. This is by design—architects of destruction want you to feel like you're trying to hold back a tempest with only your two hands, because faced with that calculus, who wouldn't flee for higher ground? But the good news is that deep calls to deep, and steadfast solidarity is a deep spring indeed. We can't meet evil which overwhelms us by lying down and letting it—or by burying our heads in the sand. We can meet it—and overcome it—by joining together in our own wave of *sumud*. ❧

Pray with your hearts

Join Omar and Sabeel in prayer each week by signing up for the weekly Wave of Prayer at Sabeel.org

If you're reading this in Toronto, consider joining Christians For a Free Palestine Toronto as we pray this prayer on Wednesdays. Visit Instagram.com/ChristiansForAFreePalestineTO for more information.

The following three poems were published on Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and Easter Sunday, 2025. In the Christian faith, these days commemorate the crux of suffering, the depths of despair, and the victory of life over death.

Sacrifice

We know very little of sacrifice.

We, whose walls stand upright, whose taps run with cool water, whose loved ones sit at the end of the couch or the telephone wire, we who have bills to pay and shifts to work and kids to drive to soccer, we know little of sacrifice.

When we know sacrifice, it's a grain offering from bountiful fields. It's a tenth; it's an hour; It's an afternoon. Maybe for some of us who reach further it's a job, or a degree, or privacy. But not for most.

And today we talk of sacrifice.

In my study Bible, sacrifice is splayed out like a specimen for dissection—a bird whose wings and feet are pinned and whose organs have been fished out, divided up, and measured, in search of a song. *Penal substitutionary atonement*. 'The perfect plan of a just God.' Is this what justice looks like?

"We considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted." Look at him up there. Look at them up there. Doesn't He have a right to defend himself? Is this not what justification looks like?

So it's blasphemy to drape the tree with olive leaves and fishing line? Don't you recognize the face of the God you serve? Don't you recognize his flesh, his pierced hands, his mangled feet, there and there and there?

So it's hateful to cast this scene, with its perpetrators and victims reminiscent of old lies? Show me the hate. All I see is life-giving creeds and heart-rending sorrows twisted into both shield and spear by greedy empires, the same as always.

We know very little of sacrifice. Of living steadfastly in the direction of liberation, and being cut down and strung up for it. For your life to run counter to the desires of the powerful and the many who gain from your loss.

"But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him."

I do not want peace if it tastes like silence and blood.

Silence

We know very little of silence,

Particularly as people who wrap ourselves in it

For us it's a blanket, a comfort. A warmth that coats us when the crow begins to cry and we hit the snooze button for just five more minutes, three more times.

But still, we know very little because ours isn't the sharp end. We don't feel the business end of silence, the muzzle and the muzzle flash, the indifferent gaze and the editorial mandate.

We know the silence of a tomb, not as the throat screamed raw, the fingernails snapping, bent backwards, the heaving tears on stone, but as pricing frankincense at the market.

'Would you believe it's gone up again?'

Where are the trumpets? Where are the rocks crying out? What are they waiting for that they haven't already heard?

If God was not in the hurricane, if God was not in the earthquake, if God was not in the fire, if God was not in the silence between prelude and benediction, then where is he??

A still, small voice may speak salvation to me, but I imagine it's hard to hear over the roar of F-35s.

Salvation

We know very little of salvation.

We know the cracking of eggshells and the breaking of dawn, but what of chains and border walls?

What of life stolen from death? Of planting bombed-out fields? Of tearful reunions? Of hands which bleed as they pull away rubble, and shouts of praise louder than any Sunday service? What do we know of crawling out of the tomb, or being dragged out? What do we know of resurrection?

We know miracles in melted sugar, but the sweeter impossibilities seem so much harder to imagine.

Did you ever stop to think that, maybe, after it rolled away the stone, that angel gripped him tight under his armpits, felt the tickle of his chest hairs and sticky paste his sweat made of the ash, and pulled him into the sun? Do you think it wiped his face? Do you think it made him tea?

Do you think it told him the worst was over? Or do you think it wasn't so sure?

"It is finished."

How long do you think he sat, catching his breath, rubbing his wrists, listening to the birds? How long until he heard his neighbour weeping, planted his palms on the cool stone, and rose again?

The grave is empty. He is not here.

Go look for him.

CRY OUT!

Pra
Pra

*God of **justice**, we cry out to you in this time of profound injustice. Almost two years into this current genocide, this justice deferred has never felt more like justice denied. Creation itself weeps from the scars that weapons have carved in it, and chokes on the blood of our Palestinian neighbours, spilled so cruelly. We pray for justice to return swiftly and powerfully, wiping every tear away and restoring every ruined place. Help us to remember those neighbours who will never see earthly justice, like Motaz and Zakariya—just children—and the first responders Saleh, Rifaat, Ashraf, Raed, Mohammad, Mohammad, Ezz, and Mustafa, killed by racist lies and those who believe them as much as by bullets. Help us see the ways in which justice might grow like a mustard tree from the smallest acts of faithfulness.*

*God of **truth**, our heads swim in lies made to dehumanize and separate. We look around and see so many who have been pulled down into these murky depths, and many more who lash out at anyone trying to come to their rescue. Bless those like Eissa, Mahmoud, and Rabie who use their talents to bring truth like fresh air to the drowning. Fill us with righteous anger on behalf of those like Zakariya who reveal horrifying truths simply due to the way they were killed. Truth should not come at the cost of death, but we know that, for too many, this river of blood is what it took to open their eyes and break their hard hearts.*

*God of **comfort and compassion**, guide us by the hand through this cruel reality where the simplest comforts have become the highest luxury for our Palestinian neighbours, and where we are ever more realizing how our own comforts come at the cost of their lives. Strengthen all those who work to heal, support, and bring dignity to their neighbours, like Dr. Samah Jabr, Saeed and Sa'ed of Sulala, and the steadfast volunteers of the Sameer Project. Multiply their efforts and bring them the care they so generously give to others. Fix in our hearts those like the first responders, Saleh, Rifaat, Ashraf, Raed, Mohammad, Mohammad, Ezz, and Mustafa, who were killed for the 'crime' of compassion; give us even a tenth of their bravery and watch us move mountains.*

*God of **steadfastness and faithfulness**, we anguish at the cruel irony that such immense suffering gives us so many examples of* sumud. *We long for a day when faithfulness will be measured between equal partners, rather than against the grim yardstick of colonial violence. For those like Essam who work brick by brick to build a future for their families, only to have it all torn away by the whims of the powerful, we pray you return their efforts a hundred-fold. For those like Omar who remind us of the value of relentless communities of faith, we pray you bring those unseen and hoped-for futures into brilliant clarity.*

*God of **peace**, we lament how impotent and counterfeit that word has become in our world today. You teach us peace as restoration, as possibility, as right relationships, but so many only see peace as absence, obfuscation, and silence. We pray for all those committed to genuine peace, rooted in justice, truth, and faithfulness. We pray for all those who need this kind of peace so badly. We pray particularly for the children of Palestine, like Zakariya and Motaz, who have never known peace—never had the opportunities of childhood that so many of us enjoy—and whose very lives were taken from them during a time of so-called 'peace.' We pray for all who worked so hard for a ceasefire, only to find another counterfeit in that 'peace' too. Nevertheless, we rejoice for the small moments of restoration our neighbours could experience in that time and pray that this foretaste would sustain and compel us as we march ever closer to the promised feast.*

*God of **hope**, give us the courage to believe that that feast will come. Give us creativity to foresee tears of joy when all we see now are tears of sorrow. Give us nourished, vibrant imaginations that are not content with the small and suffocating plans of the powerful. Bless those like Dr. Lamma who challenge us to do this difficult work, and all of our many neighbours who issue that challenge with their actions.*

Surrounded by death, we echo the words you spoke to the prophet Ezekiel: "can these bones live?" And we answer in his voice: "sovereign Lord, you alone know." Give us faith in your infinite imagination, which stretches beyond the cross and the border wall, beyond the tomb and the rubble, and into a restored heaven and Earth. Give us courage to join that restoration now.

Let Palestine be free.

y with your heart
ay with your voice

SPEAK UP!

One of the most important things we as citizens can do for our neighbours in Palestine is to make our voices heard—and I don't just mean by voting.

We need to **call on our elected officials**. Remind them that our neighbours in Palestine deserve their rights to life and liberty just as much as the rest of us. Remind them that they have a responsibility to act decisively to end the Israeli occupation, end the current genocide in Gaza (and the unmitigated arming of Israel that's supporting it), and support Palestinian sovereignty over their lands. Remind them that justice is the only way to real peace. If you're Canadian, you can find your Member of Parliament by visiting ***OurCommons.ca/Members*** and searching by your postal code. In the US you can do the same by visiting ***USA.gov/Elected-Officials***.

You can also make change by **speaking up in your local community**! Ask your **church's leaders** to pray for Palestine, combat Christian Zionism, and use the church's unified voice to speak on behalf of Palestinian freedom. You can also have **conversations with your friends and loved ones**. I know sometimes those close to us can be the hardest to talk to, but these conversations can also be the most impactful; sharing the story of one of the neighbours you just met in this issue is a great place to start!

Lastly, it's important to **raise our voices loudly and publicly**, so that all our neighbours can hear us. Over the past 22 months, people like you and me all around the world have been taking to the streets in record numbers to march for an end to the genocide and for Palestinian freedom. Keep an eye out for when organizers like the ***Palestinian Youth Movement*** post about upcoming marches and then add your voice to the collective call for justice!

MAGAZINES

Did you Know?

Imago Palestina resources are available for free to print at home (or your local print shop)—including this very magazine!

POSTERS & POSTCARDS

Photo by Rabie Hussein of Gaza

ORGANIZE!

If we want anything to get better for our neighbours in Palestine, we can't do it alone. Luckily, there are hundreds, thousands, even millions of people of conscience living near you who also want peace and justice, and are willing to work for it. Some organizations already doing great work, that you could connect with, include:

- **Christians for a Free Palestine**, a US and Toronto-based network of Christians across denominations working "to use our public voice and our collective power to advocate for peace, challenge Christian Zionism, and demand an immediate ceasefire." Find more info at ***ChristiansForAFreePalestine.com***. The Toronto chapter, with which *Imago Palestina* is a partner, was recently founded and is looking for more Christians to help grow solidarity north of the border—visit ***@christiansforafreepalestineto on Instagram*** for more info.

- **The Palestinian Youth Movement**, an international grassroots network of Palestinian youth and their allies working in a variety of ways to support Palestinian freedom through their communities. Learn more at ***PalestinianYouthMovement.com***, or on ***Instagram @palestinianyouthmovement***. If you're in Toronto, visit ***@pymtoronto*** on Instagram.

- **World Beyond War**, a "a global nonviolent movement to end war and establish a just and sustainable peace." It focuses on education, advocacy, and actions to bring attention to the machinery of warfare in our communities and work to disrupt it. Learn more at ***WorldBeyondWar.org***.

- **Labour For Palestine**, a Canadian coalition of workers in all sectors of life, aims to leverage our collective labour power for the sake of our neighbours in Palestine. There are over 30 different subgroups, representing different labour sectors and union spaces, so there's definitely a place for you. Learn more at ***LabourForPalestine.com***

Other great ways to organize include starting a Palestine reading group at your church (I recommend *The Other Side of the Wall* by Rev. Munther Isaac!) or getting together with other people in your neighbourhood, particularly your federal riding (if you're in Toronto, there are already riding groups you can join—check out @toronto4directory on Instagram!).

If you're having trouble getting connected, feel free to send me a message on Instagram @svencomicsart or by email to sven@svencomics.ca.
I'd be happy to help you out!

DONATE!

You can donate to **grassroots organizations** currently working on the ground in Gaza. This includes the Sameer Project (Instagram.com/TheSameerProject), which was highlighted in this issue, as well as **Gaza Soup Kitchen** (***GazaSoupKitchen.org***), **Thamra** (***Thamra.org***), and Ele Elna Elak (EleElnaElak.org), which were introduced in previous issues of *Imago Palestina*. Other great organizations include Connecting Humanity (Connecting-Humanity.org) and Crips for eSims for Gaza (CripsForEsimsForGaza.org), and Schools Without Borders (Instagram.com/Schools.Without.Borders).

You can also help individual families that I haven't been able to feature yet by visiting **GazaFunds.com** or partnering with **Watermelon Buddies** (Instagram.com/WeAreWatermelonBuddies).

You can donate to **large aid organizations** that serve our Palestinian neighbours. I typically prefer the first two options, because your money can become diluted in some large organizations, but a few with very good track records include the **United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees** (aka **UNRWA**, ***UNRWA.org***), which was featured in the previous issue, as well as the Palestine Children's Relief Fund (aka PCRF, pcrf.net), and World Central Kitchen (wck.org).

THE SAMEER PROJECT

Sulala Animals Rescue

SABEEL السبيل

Photo by Rabie Hussein of Gaza

More Information

In each live update of Imago Palestina (posted on ImagoPalestina.Substack.com), I provide a handful of resources that either I used in my research or I think would be useful or interesting to you, based on the topic at hand. I've reproduced this exhaustive list below, but I also want to take a moment to highlight some particularly useful resources.

See, one of the most common things I hear folks say when I bring up our neighbours in Palestine is that "it's so complicated." While it's true that any event—any person for that matter—has universes of complexity and nuance, that doesn't mean that there isn't a lot of very accessible information to inform us, nor that certain aspects—like Israel's human rights abuses, the illegality of the occupation, or the lived experiences of our neighbours—aren't well documented and quite simple to explain.

When people say "it's so complicated," what they really mean is that they feel powerless, that they feel overwhelmed, and that they don't know who to trust. But knowledge is power, the more you learn the more confident you will feel. Here are some great, trustworthy sources to start with:

Al Jazeera News
...for up to date news coverage with reporters in Palestine

Institute for Palestine Studies
...for the leading academic resource on Palestine

B'Tselem
...for insights from an Israeli human right's group

Across the Divide Podcast
...for conversations between Palestinian Christians and their siblings in faith from around the world

The BDS Movement
...for information on the biggest non-violent response to Israeli colonialism

+972 Magazine
...for high-quality independent journalism from Palestine-Israel

Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME)
...for policy analysis and actions Canadians can take for justice and peace

The Unsettled Podcast
...for personal stories and reporting from Jewish neighbours lifting up Palestinian voices

Jewish Currents
...for expert discussions on society and culture from a Jewish perspective, with a strong focus on Palestine

Palestinian Youth Movement
...for a network of Palestinian Youth and allies working in cities around the world for Palestinian freedom

...and these great Palestinian journalists:

Bisan Owda *(Instagram: @wizard_bisan1)*
Wadea Abu al-Saoud *(Instagram: @wadeaa_.9)*
Mohammed R. Mhawish *(Bluesky: @mohamhawish.bsky.social; Twtter: @MohammRafik)*
Mariam Barghouti *(Instagram/Twitter: @mariambarghouti)*

And now for all the "More Information" from each section. All sources are cited so as to be clear and easily searchable. In the cases where a source would not be easily found by searching the name and publication, I've marked that entry with a ❦ and included a QR code to the original post on ImagoPalestina.Substack.com (QR codes can usually be scanned with the pre-installed camera app on your smartphone or tablet).

"She Opened Her Eyes"

[1] "She opened her eyes" video by Translating Falasteen on Instagram ❦

[2] Post on Bluesky by Mohammed R. Mhawis: "I am in tears…" ❦

[3] "Mohammed R. Mhawish, Journalist" at Imago Palestina

[4] "What Are the Three Phases of the Gaza Ceasefire Deal?" by Mohammed Mhawish at the Institute for Palestine Studies

[5] "Released Gaza prisoners say they were held at notorious torture camp with Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya" at Mondoweiss

[6] "Six killed in Israeli drone attack on occupied West Bank's Jenin camp" at Al Jazeera

[7] "Despite truce, Israel has damaged or destroyed hundreds of buildings in Lebanon" at the Washington Post

[8] "Analysis: Why is Netanyahu threatening to resume war on Gaza?" at Al Jazeera

[9] "More than 100 people killed in Gaza since ceasefire agreed" at Al Jazeera

[10] "After a Deadly 3-Hour Delay, Gaza Ceasefire Finally Takes Effect" at Truthout

[11] Post on Bluesky by Mohammed R. Mhawish: "My friend and colleague Anas Al Sharif…" ❦

'Staying alive was luck': Joy, despair in Gaza over Israel-Hamas ceasefire" at Al Jazeera

Dr. Lamma Mansour

[1] "CATC # 5 Lamma Mansour: Still, Hope" podcast episode by Across the Divide (this is a YouTube link, but Across the Divide is available wherever you listen to podcasts) ❦

Lamma was also featured on Across the Divide in the episode "Why is Christian Lament for Gaza Essential? with Lamma Mansour" ❦

[2] "CATC2024 Day 4: A Christ-Centered Response in Times of War - Dr. Lamma Mansour" video by Christ at The Checkpoint on YouTube

Lamma quotes Jürgen Moltmann from his book, *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology.* I used a slightly longer version of the quote than she did. Apologies for not having a page number.

In sourcing the quote, I also came across this article about Motlmann which I found interesting and relevant, and you might too!: "Astonishment Very Close to Prayer: A Devotional" by Katie Snipes Lancaster at Kenilworth Union Church

I wanted to talk more about Lamma's scholarly work, which is fascinating and speaks powerfully to the idea of radically changing institutions to meet the needs of the people, rather than accepting individual solutions which fail to remedy the root problems. However, it ended up not quite fitting with the rest of the essay, so I had to cut it. I'd highly recommend you read her research on your own though! It's surprisingly readable for academic work. Here are two I'd suggest to start with:

"Palestinian Arab undergraduate students' transition to Israeli higher education: a mixed methods study" (2024) by Lamma Mansour in Studies in Higher Education

"'Not ours': Palestinian Arab students' perceptions of the campus ethnonational climate in Israeli higher education" (2024) by Lamma Mansour in Race Ethnicity and Education

You can find the rest of her work on Google Scholar

"Stop! Make space for lament" by Lamma Mansour at Come And See: The Christian Website from Nazareth

The Sameer Project

[1] "The Volunteers of Ele Elna Elak" at Imago Palestina

[2] "Mahmoud Almadhoun, Chef" at Imago Palestina

[3]"Yousef & Leena of Thamra" at Imago Palestina

[4]Translating Falasteen on Instagram (@translating_falasteen)

[5] "Dr. Refaat Alareer" at Imago Palestina

[6]Video of a mental health initiative at al-Aman Kindergarten, by The Sameer Project on Instagram ❦

[7] "Sumud" at the Interactive Encyclopedia of the Palestinian Question

The Sameer Project can be found on social media at @TheSameerProject on Instagram and @SameerProject on Twitter/X

""A Form of Resistance Towards Liberation" - Hala Sabbah on The Sameer Project," an episode of the Millennials are Killing Capitalism podcast (source for Hala's quote at the beginning)

"Inside One of Gaza's Internal Displacement Camps" at The Indypendent

Dr. Samah Jabr

[1] "After 15 years of blockade, four out of five children in Gaza say they are living with depression, grief and fear" at Save the Children

[2] "The occupation in my office: Speaking sense to power in therapeutic work" by Dr. Samah Jabr at Middle East Eye

[3] "'Chronic traumatic stress disorder': the Palestinian psychiatrist challenging western definitions of trauma" at The Guardian

[4] "Israel launches major offensive in Jenin days after Gaza ceasefire" at Middle East Eye

[5] "Four Wars Old: Fourteen Years of Childhood in Gaza" Infographic at Visualizing Palestine

[6] "Let's Talk about Indigenous Mental Health: Trauma, Suicide & Settler Colonialism" by Michaela McGuire - Jaad Gudgihljiwah at the Yellowhead Institute

Dr. Samah Jabr's can be found on social media at @DrSamahJabr on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter/X, as well as @DrSamah.Jabr on TikTok

Find more writing from Dr. Samah Jabr at Linktr.ee/SamahJabr. Some selected articles include:

"Palestine In Motion - Samah Jabr: A Palestinian struggle against oppression" by Dr. Samah Jabr at Al Jazeera

"Why US mental health associations justify Israel's genocidal attack on Gaza" by Dr. Samah Jabr at Middle East Eye

Motaz Imad Mousa Abu Tabeekh

[1] "Murad & Mohammad Na'ja" at Imago Palestina

"Jenin City" at Welcome to Palestine

[2] "The colonial idea that built the Palestinian Authority" at +972 Magazine

[3] "Quick Facts: The Palestinian Nakba (Catastrophe)" at the Institute for Middle East Understanding

[4] TheFreedomTheatre.org

[5] "Mariam Barghouti, Writer & Journalist" at Imago Palestina

[6] Mariam Barghouti's tweet about Operation Iron Wall casualties ❦

[7] Francesca Albanese's tweet about Operation Iron Wall ❦

[8] "Israeli forces shoot, kill 14-year-old Palestinian boy in Sebastia" at DCI Palestine

"Palestinian children under attack in Jenin" at DCI Palestine

"Israel Invades Jenin Days After Signing Gaza "Ceasefire"" at DropSite News *[Co-written by our neighbour, Mariam Barghouti]*

"Situation across West Bank, not only Jenin, 'really catastrophic': Palestinian activist" video by Al Jazeera *[Very clear, concise, and contextualized overview on Jenin and Israel's assaults on the West Bank]*

"Jenin is 'only the beginning': Israel moves its war on Palestinians to the West Bank" at Mondoweiss

"The Palestinian Authority's Assault on the West Bank Resistance" by Mariam Barghouti at DropSite News

"UN says Israel using 'unlawful lethal force' in raids on Jenin" at Al Jazeera

"Minister says Israel applying 'lessons' from Gaza in West Bank operation" at Al Jazeera

Rajieen, Returning

[1] "Israel wants no celebrations when Palestinian prisoners freed in Gaza deal" at The New Arab

[2] "'I'd crawl if I have to': Palestinians eager to return to northern Gaza" at Al Jazeera

[3] "Isam Hamad" at Imago Palestina

[4] "Resolution 194" at UNRWA.org

[5] "The 3 Israels" at Jewitches

[6] "Drone footage shows the scale of destruction in Gaza's Rafah — video" at the Guardian

[7] "'My neighborhood was one of the most beautiful in Gaza. All that's left is rubble'" at +972 Magazine

[8]"Israeli sniper kills Palestinian boy in Gaza on second day of ceasefire" at Middle East Monitor

Watch the compilation of videos of our neighbours' tearful reunions that I referenced to draw today's illustration ❦

Rajieen, which means "returning," has long been a rallying cry for Palestinians. Here are a couple resources I wasn't able to reference in the post:

> ""We Are Returning": An Anthem for Palestinian Liberation" by Maha Nassar at the Critical Inquiry Blog
>
> Palestinian activists from Maryland perform the Chant of Return ❦

Some messages from our neighbours about this return: ❦

> Bisan finally returns to her house
>
> Gaza Soup Kitchen brings chef Mahmoud's remains to his family cemetery, only to destroyed
>
> The Sameer Project reports on the new situation in North Gaza and Gaza City
>
> Rabie documents the journey back home
>
> Ahmed the Little Farmer documents the journey back home

Video from Bisan Owda as she approaches the Netzarim checkpoint ❦

Video from UN OCHA showing the crowd of Gazans waiting at the Netzarim checkpoint ❦

"All That Remains" infographic at Humaniti Project

Eissa Fanous

[1] "56 years after the 1967 War, the world still denies the Palestinian experience" at Mondoweiss

[2] "Dystopian and Alternate Realities: An Interview with Lyd filmmakers, Sarah Ema Friedland and Rami Younis" at Jadaliyya

[3]"CATC2024 Day 4: A Christ-Centered Response in Times of War - Dr. Lamma Mansour" video by Christ at The Checkpoint on YouTube

"A Lyd without the Nakba" at +972 Magazine

""Lyd": Palestinian & Jewish Directors of New Sci-Fi Doc on How 1948 Nakba Devastated Palestinian City" at Democracy Now!

"Imaginative Resistance: An Interview with 'Lyd' Directors Rami Younis and Sarah Friedland" at Rough Cut Film

Mahmoud Muna

You can find more info about The Educational Bookshop at their website, EducationalBookshop.com. You should also check out *Daybreak in Gaza: Stories of Palestinian Lives and Culture*, an anthology co-edited by Mahmoud in response to the genocide in Gaza. If you're in Toronto, you can get a copy from *A Different Booklist* Bookstore

[1] "Bookbytes: From the river to the sea, a colouring book illustrated by Nathi Ngubane." video by Salaamedia, hosted on YouTube

[2] "The day Israel came for the booksellers" at +972 Magazine

[3] "A Lyd without the Nakba" at +972 Magazine

[4] "Israel wants no celebrations when Palestinian prisoners freed in Gaza deal" at the New Arab

[5] "UN experts deeply concerned over 'scholasticide' in Gaza" press release by the United Nations

[6] "Trump's shocking purge of public health data, explained" at Vox

[7] ""Can't spell history without a T": Hundreds protest Trump's trans erasure at Stonewall" at Salon

[8]"Our Approach to Zionism" at Jewish Voice for Peace

"Why Israel's Raid on a Palestinian Bookshop Matters" at ArtReview

"An Israeli raid of a famous Palestinian bookstore stokes censorship fears" at NPR

"South African book at centre of raid on Jerusalem bookshop" at GroundUp

Zakariya Barbakh

[1] "Israel continues to block entry of temporary housing into Gaza" at Middle East Eye

[2] "Hamas offers to release all captives for end to Israel's war on Gaza" at Al Jazeera

[3] "The damage of Trump's Gaza plan has already been done" at +972 Magazine

[4] "Israel drops leaflets threatening Gaza's population 'leave or die'" at The New Arab

[5] "Israel ready 'at any moment' to resume Gaza war: Netanyahu" at Al Jazeera

"One minute, they were celebrating Gaza's ceasefire. The next, they were killed" at CNN

I'm indebted to the diligent work of Lets Talk Palestine for compiling many of the ceasefire violations I referenced today, in an Instagram post, which also features a substantial battery of citations. Read the web version of this introduction (by using the QR code above) to find a link to this post. ❦

"Despite ceasefire, Israel continues to commit genocide in Gaza" at Euro-Med Monitor

"Gazans say Israeli ceasefire violations are meant to cause mass expulsion" at Mondoweiss

"Habiba Al-Askari: The Child Whose Limbs and Dreams Were Amputated by War" at Watan

"How's the bus fleet in Gaza doing? Avoiding the trap of false 🚩 stories" video by Sim Kern, hosted on YouTube

Essam Awad

[1] "Muhammad Bhar" at Imago Palestina

[2] "UNRWA Situation Report #101 on the situation in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem - All information from 8 - 14 April 2024, is valid as of 14 April 2024 at 22:30" at ReliefWeb

[3] "Israel is stepping up its military aggression across the region. But is it out of strength, or weakness?" at Mondoweiss

"What they lost: Families in terror as Israel raids West Bank camps" at Al Jazeera (this is the article where Essam speaks to Al Jazeera)

"Israel Imports Gaza Abuses into the West Bank" at Human Rights Watch

"'Worse than the Second Intifada': West Bank refugees reel from Israeli offensive" at +972 Magazine

"Israeli army kills three Palestinians in West Bank refugee camp assault" at Al Jazeera

"Jenin under siege: Civilians suffer amid Israeli military assault" at TRTWorld

"Far'a Camp" at UNRWA

Sulala Animal Rescue (citations provided by Sara Farhat)

Golden Star Award 2024 - Worldwide Vets. (2024). Retrieved from Instagram - Worldwide Vets ❦

Al-Err, S. (2024). Interview with Golden Star Award Winner. Retrieved from Facebook - Sulala Animal Rescue ❦

Sulala Animal Rescue. (2024). Saeed Al-Err: Passionate Animal Rescuer in Gaza. Retrieved from Dawn News

Sulala Animal Rescue. (2024). Saeed Al-Err's Commitment to Animal Welfare Amid Crisis. Retrieved from Instagram - Sulala Animal Rescue ❦

Interview with Saeed Al-Err on His Work with Sulala Animal Rescue. (2024). Retrieved from CounterPunch

Sulala Animal Rescue: Protecting Stray Animals in Gaza Amid Conflict. (2024). Retrieved from Facebook - Sulala Society ❦

Israel is Killing Peace

[1] "'We thought the war had started again': Israeli killings in Gaza resume as ceasefire hangs by a thread" at Mondoweiss

[2] "What the Arab summit's plan for Gaza means for Palestine" at Mondoweiss

"Israel's blockage of aid into Gaza is a crime against humanity and violation of international law" at Amnesty International

"Israel Again Blocks Gaza Aid, Further Risking Lives" at Human Rights Watch

"Israel cuts off aid to Gaza as it seeks to change ceasefire deal with Hamas" at Al Jazeera

"Israel blocks aid into Gaza in move Hamas calls 'blackmail' to force truce concessions" at CBC

I saw a Tweet from Eman Abdelhadi early in the week and I realized I sorta paraphrased it in the paragraph about reports on "blocking aid." No offense intended Eman! ❦

A message from the Heart of Gaza

Follow Rabie on Instagram at @_rabiehussein

"Why did Israel break the ceasefire in Gaza?" at Al Jazeera

"The Take: What Israel's shattered ceasefire means for Gaza" podcast episode at Al Jazeera

"The Last Chapter of the Genocide" at Mondoweiss

"A child in Gaza watched his mother burn alive. Then he died too." at Mondoweiss

"The only visible light in Gaza is coming from Israeli bombardment" at Mondoweiss

"174 Palestinian children in Gaza killed by relentless Israeli attacks overnight" at Defence for Children International—Palestine

Saleh, Refiaat, Ashraf, Raed, Mohammad, Mohammad, Ezz, and Mustafa

"PRCS: The Killing of Eight of Our Medics is A Tragedy Against Humanitarian Work" press release by the Palestine Red Crescent Society

"The first responders massacre: 14 aid workers found dead and buried, hands bound" at Mondoweiss

"Palestinian aid workers likely shot 'execution style', forensic expert says" at Al Jazeera

"At least 322 children reportedly killed in the Gaza Strip following breakdown of ceasefire" report by UNICEF

"Palestine: MSF condemns Israeli strike on Nasser hospital in Gaza" press release by Doctors Without Borders

"Israeli attacks on Gaza schools sheltering displaced Palestinians kill 33" at Al Jazeera

"Israel's justifications for Jabalia UNRWA centre attack are baseless, reflect disregard for int'l law" press release by Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor

Omar Haramy

Just a note: In researching Sabeel on your own, Google will often present results from "NGO Monitor." While the name of this website makes it seem unbiased and objective, NGO Monitor is actually an incredibly biased, right-wing, Zionist organization designed to smear organizations and individuals who stand up for Palestinian rights. They seem to have a particular distaste for Sabeel, so keep your head on a swivel and steer clear if they show up in your searches.

[1] Message about Sumud by Decolonizing Health and Dr. Samah Jabr ❦

[2] "Dr. Samah Jabr, Liberatory Psychiatrist" at Imago Palestina

[3] "Rev. Munther Isaac" at Imago Palestina

[4] "Palestinian Liberation Theology" at Friends of Sabeel North America

[5] "Peace activist Omar Haramy awarded 2025 Berrigan-McAlister Award" press release from DePaul University

[6] "Ahmed the Little Farmer" at Imago Palestina

[7] "What does the Palestinian keffiyeh symbolize?" at Hirbawi Kufiyas

[8] "What is the symbolism of the keffiyeh patterns?" at Handmade Palestine

[9] "Palestinian Reflections on Sumud: Hanan Ashrawi and Omar Haramy" at Canadian Friends of Sabeel

Sabeel can be found online at Sabeel.org and on Instagram (@sabeelelquds)

Omar Haramy can be found on Twitter/X at @OmarHaramy

The Sabeel Wave of Prayer for April 10th, 2025 (the week of original publication) can be found at Sabeel.org/Wave-of-Prayer-236

Find all of Sabeel's Wave of Prayers at Sabeel.org/category/Wave-of-Prayers

Canadian Friends of Sabeel can be found online at FriendsOfSabeel.ca and on Instagram (@canadianfriendsofsabeel)

Friends of Sabeel North America can be found online at fosna.org and on Instagram at @fosnalive

"Lessons from Liberation Theology with Omar Haramy of Sabeel 2/10/2024" video by Kairos Centre on YouTube

"Christianity in Palestine with Omar Harami" episode of the Bitcoin Standard Podcast on YouTube (yeah, it's a bit of a strange place to find this conversation, but Omar and the host are childhood friends)

Another good message from Decolonizing Health and Dr. Samah Jabr about overwhelm & desensitization ❦

"Seek #JusticeAndPeace in the Holy Land" at World Council of Churches (Omar has a short message on this page about "Choosing to Stay")

Thank you so much for reading this volume of Imago Palestina!

Odds are,

You got this book for free

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